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JANUARY 22, 2009
ISSUE 791



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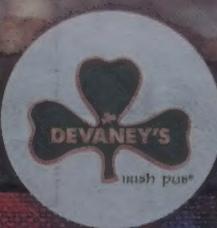
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see magazine w5: Edmonton's issues, arts and entertainment weekly

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GRACE

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PHOTO BY MERYL SMITH LAWTON

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"

I WAS SURE I'D HEAD OUT TO VANCOUVER, BUT EDMONTON BECAME A PART OF ME



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High School Musical: The Ice Tour, Rexall Place, Jan. 23

JANUARY 25

writing | CONNI MASSING If you have aspirations of slingin' words for a living, it's in your best interests to swing by Stanley Milner Library to pick up a few tips from this old pro whose film, theatre, and radio credits have been entertaining audiences for years.

JANUARY 26

exhibit | GROWING TOGETHER HOME AND AWAY If you're curious to see how immigrant artists like Nhan Lu and Aloy Mora view Canada, check out their work at Henderson Hall, 5:30 p.m.

JANUARY 27

learning | MUSIC LAW & CONTRACT CONFERENCE A panel of industry experts tells you and those punks you call a band how to work the legal side of the biz. Brix Bar & Grill, 6 p.m.

JANUARY 28

exhibit | 100 STORIES ABOUT MY GRANDMOTHER Sex trade workers have grandmas too, and Peter Kingstone is going to make sure you don't forget it. Latitude 53.

JANUARY 29

mixer | EDMONTON RUSH AFTER BUSINESS MIXER Come put those brown-nosing skills to good use at the Rush pregame mixer. Then scream your head off for some fine Edmonton lacrosse action. Rexall Place, 5 p.m.

JANUARY 30

theatre | WILD GUYS Any play about three hot guys sharing some bonding time in the woods is going to be racy. Ladies, this one's for you! (Just kidding: it's actually a play about middle-aged male spirit.) Festival Place, 7:30 p.m.

JANUARY 31

haggis | ROBBIE BURNS' BIRTHDAY Lordy, look who's 250! Celebrate the birth of the Bard of Ayrshire with live music and other Scottish festivities. Palace Banquet Hall, 6 p.m.

FEBRUARY 1

recital | HONG XU Regardless of what your girlfriend might have told you, this guy's fingerwork puts yours in shame, and he's just playing the piano. Arden Theatre, 11 a.m. & 8 p.m.

FEBRUARY 2

dance | SO YOU THINK YOU CAN DANCE Shake your hot rump for the judges or simply watch the contestants wiggle around for their shot at the big time. Rexall Place, 7:30 p.m.

FEBRUARY 3

lecture | REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGIES Given Edmonton's urban planning track record, let's hope Neil Rodgers, Jason Thorne, Kevin Curtis, and Greg Christensen can pass along some wisdom. Delta Edmonton Centre Suite Hotel, 7 p.m.

FEBRUARY 4

music | DUFF ROBISON The king of the Edmonton pub scene gets his Irish on at Devaney's, where he'll serenade you with hot covers and a few of his own numbers.

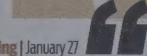
FEBRUARY 5

exhibit | DOUBLE TAKE Photos, paintings, and stop-motion — oh my! Jana Hargarten and friends want you to take a look at life through a retro lens. Profiles Public Art Gallery.



Grimmer Than Grimm, Catalyst Theatre, until Feb. 1

learning | January 27



A PANEL OF INDUSTRY EXPERTS TELLS YOU AND THOSE PUNKS YOU CALL A BAND HOW TO WORK THE LEGAL SIDE OF THE BIZ.

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“THE SLOWDOWN IN ALBERTA GIVES US AN OPPORTUNITY TO SAY, ‘OKAY, WHAT DO WE NEED FOR WHEN WE GET CRUNCHED AGAIN?’

MUNICIPAL-FEDERAL AFFAIRS · ECONOMIC STIMULUS · BY ANGELA BRUNSCHEOT | 1799 words

Save The Cities, Save The Economy



Please, May We Have Some More? | Coun. Karen Leibovici wants any federal economic stimulus money to go towards neighbourhood renewal, public transit, and affordable housing. PHOTO BY MERYL SMITH LAWTON

EDMONTON MIGHT BE DOING BETTER THAN MOST, BUT THE CITY STILL NEEDS FEDERAL CASH, ECONOMIST SAYS

Jan. 27 is D-day for Canadian Finance Minister Jim Flaherty and the Conservatives.

“D,” in this case, stands for deficit.

At every level of government, politicians are expecting the Conservatives to go into the red in order to provide a stimulus package to cushion Canadians from the worst of the world economic crisis.

“D” could also stand for defeat if the Conservatives don’t follow through with enough money, opposition parties have warned.

Even though the Conservatives have traditionally abhorred deficits, and Flaherty once said he wasn’t in the business of fixing potholes, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities is betting the Conservatives are serious about spending. The group compiled a list of more than 1,000 projects from cities across the country — that figure includes public transit projects, affordable housing, and,

yes, fixing potholes.

Edmonton’s \$2.4-billion wish list includes \$825 million for the NAIT LRT line, which is already underway, \$610 million for the south LRT from Century Park to Heritage Valley Towne Centre, \$50 million to revitalize the 118th Avenue neighbourhood, and \$20 million for road repairs.

Edmonton Coun. Karen Leibovici sits on the federation’s national board of directors. Her top priorities for any incoming federal funding are neighbourhood renewal, public transit, and affordable housing. “We have lots of infrastructure needs that we can’t afford, and as a result are borrowing to address them,” she says, referring to council’s recent decision to borrow money for neighbourhood revitalization.

As a representative for Ward 1 in the west end, she sees the extension of the LRT into that area as a great solution to both the congestion problem and environmental concerns. She also points out that by the middle of next year, the city will have completed a full map of new LRT lines for every quadrant

of the city, but will lack the funds to move beyond that.

She’s also hoping for a commitment from the federal government on affordable housing, so that the next time Edmonton experiences a boom there will be options for low-income families.

“The slowdown in Alberta gives us an opportunity to say, ‘Okay, what do we need for when we get crunched again?’”

Indeed, it wasn’t that long ago that Edmonton’s economy was so hot, bureaucrats weren’t able to attract enough construction companies to bid on city projects. So, beyond the usual infrastructure needs of the city, why does Edmonton need this stimulus money?

For Paul Tsounis, Edmonton’s chief economist, it’s all about sending out the right messages.

He argues that Edmontonians could create a recession here by holding back on investments or reducing spending because they are afraid of possible dark times ahead. The government funding provides reassurance to both businesses and con-

sumers. “It’s consumer confidence that’s going to dictate what happens to the Edmonton economy in 2009,” he says.

But other than that, he feels Edmonton is on much better footing than many cities in Canada. “When you get up in the morning,” he says, “you hear about the price of oil, the exchange rate and the TSX ... and commentary out of Eastern Canada and the United States telling everyone how doom and gloom it is.” But media coverage, he adds, doesn’t necessarily have much to do with Edmonton’s situation.

As a service hub to Fort McMurray and the rest of Alberta, and with strong education and health-care sectors, Edmonton can weather the economic storm, he says.

The city’s head of transportation, Bob Boutilier, has a less optimistic view. Although he’s certainly happy the feds are thinking about increasing funding for public transportation, he’s worried the money will not come fast enough to save local construction companies. The city hit a sweet spot last fall, he says, when

there were enough contractors to complete city projects. Now, however, he’s afraid that contractors are already scaling back their operations, and laying off workers. Some companies may leave Edmonton and then the city will once again have a labour shortage. And of the companies that are in Edmonton, many already have their spring schedule full.

“That’s the hard part for people in Western Canada to understand — just how quickly we’ve lost ground,” Boutilier says. “Now, when the money comes running at us, when we go looking for those people that we thought we had, they are gone.”

That’s exactly why the federal government needs to look beyond short-term stimulus money to long-term, stable funding for cities, Leibovici says.

“We make our plans three and five years out,” she says. “If you don’t have the funding, and it’s at the whim of another order of government, then you could be halfway though a multimillion-dollar project and then not have the money to complete it.”

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Slash? Spend? Stelmach Sidesteps

NDP PROMISES TO BE "VIGILANT" AGAINST A RETURN TO KLEIN-STYLE BUDGET CUTS

CALGARY — Even before Premier Ed Stelmach floated the possibility of resurrecting his predecessor's fiscal policies to cope with the economic downturn, Alberta NDP leader Brian Mason knew what to expect.

"We want to be vigilant against another round of cuts that affect the lower income and middle-class Albertans the most," Mason said in an interview with *Fast Forward* on Jan. 15. "We want to protect the services that people depend on. We want to invest in people. We think that's the best way to come out of a recession." He listed the investments he'd like to see: renewable energy projects; city infrastructure; child care. "Things that ordinary folks need in this economic time."

Sure enough, the following day, Stelmach told the *Calgary Herald*, "I don't want to underestimate the difficulties we're going to face as Albertans. We may go back to the same strategies we used in the early 1990s."

During that time, then premier Ralph Klein made his now-infamous cuts to the provincial budget, deeply slashing jobs and social services to pay off the deficit.

"It was broad job destruction, mostly affecting young workers," recalls Heather Douglas, president of the United Nurses of Alberta (UNA). "The effect has been the loss of a whole generation of workers here."

The same week Stelmach made his comments, Conservative cabinet minister and Treasury Board president Lloyd Snelgrove told *Canadian Press*: "You cannot just blindly go on spending if your revenue streams continue to drop. Our only other realistic opportunity is to cut spending."

The possibility of spending and job cuts triggered alarm for many in the province, but at an Edmonton press conference Jan. 20, Stelmach presented a very different message and evaded repeated questions about his earlier comments. "We'll use our savings to cushion any dramatic decline in provincial revenues," Stelmach said. "Most importantly, we'll protect our most vulnerable. We're going to do that by focusing on the programs and the services that Albertans need." The premier says about \$14 billion is available for this purpose from the province's capital account and Sustainability Fund.

When a reporter asked Stelmach if he plans on cutting public sector jobs or spending, Stelmach answered, "I

don't want to lose momentum as the province of Alberta." The reporter asked the question a second time. "We're positioned, as the province of Alberta, better than anyone else," Stelmach said. The reporter tried a third time — "Are you going to cut spending? Are you going to cut jobs?" — and Stelmach replied, "As I said before, we'll be very pragmatic in setting our budget."

Yet another reporter tried the same question. "I never used the word 'cuts,'" said Stelmach, adding that he plans to protect Alberta's health and education programs.

Another reporter requested clarity. "I said we'll look at ... any place we can reduce some of our spending," replied Stelmach. "Are there programs, or things that we're doing today as government, [where] we can save a few million dollars?"

Klein passed a law forbidding deficits, and Stelmach says that "unless other governments, we don't have to finance economic stimulus by deficit spending."

But with oil worth less than \$30 a barrel (down from \$147 last summer), Liberal Leader David Swann says the province needs to look at the possibility of running a deficit to invest in Alberta's future.

"We take out a loan and we go into a debt to pay for a house," Swann says. "That's an asset for the future. This is a time where we need to be thinking about whatever it takes to keep confidence and to keep people as employed as possible. We cannot afford to be cutting at this time."

In November, the Conference Board of Canada warned governments against cutting spending to keep their budgets balanced. The strategy would only "make a difficult situation worse," says a board paper about fending off a Canadian recession. "Therefore, we fully support our governments running short-term fiscal deficits that are caused by slower economic growth and a resulting shortfall in revenues." Talk of belt-tightening, the paper continues, "sends the wrong signal at a time when economic stimulus is needed, we are to avoid recession."

Despite his comments earlier this month about the difficulties facing Alberta, Stelmach now paints a rosier picture of the province's economic future. "If, as governments, we continue to speak negatively about the economy, we're going to see further retraction of investment," he says. According to Stelmach, Alberta is in the "best financial or fiscal position of any province, and indeed, perhaps better than any jurisdiction in North America."

lookback

WEEK IN REVIEW

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



WE MAY GO BACK TO THE SAME STRATEGIES WE USED IN THE EARLY 1990S.

—Premier Ed Stelmach on the economic downturn, quoted in the *Calgary Herald*



JAN. 16, 2009 | 12:30:02 PM | PHOTO BY IAN JACKSON

Former NHL star Glenn Anderson, one of the fabled "Boys on the Bus," speaks to the crowd at City Hall. Anderson had his No. 9 retired at the Edmonton Oilers game Sunday night.

WITNESS

OUR COMMENT ON THIS WEEK'S NEWS

ALBERTA - ELECTIONS DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Some Gibson, Alberta's chief electoral officer, deserves a big pat on the back for finally recommending that donations to any leadership candidates should be made public.

Huge amounts of money exchange hands during these competitions. The public should know where that money comes from in order to properly assess politicians' decisions in the future. And if we can take things a bit further, we have a couple more recommendations.

First off, make sure that every region of Alberta has enough polling stations for the next election. There's no excuse for not putting a station on the Blood reserve in 2012.

Second, do your best to hire and train smart, non-partisan people to staff those polling stations.

Finally, and most importantly, we urge you sink your teeth into a major update of the voters' list.

ALBERTA - ECONOMY KLEIN-ERA CUTS

Premier Ed Stelmach said last week that the province might have to slash government spending in the wake of falling energy prices, the same way former premier Ralph Klein cut the provincial budget in the 1990s.

He certainly wouldn't be the first Alberta premier to pump up his rhetoric in advance of a public meeting with the feds, and so it's entirely possible he was exaggerating Alberta's situation.

And hey, if the feds are eager to spend their way out of the current economic situation, Alberta should certainly get its share. But Stelmach's statement sent all the wrong messages to Albertans at a time when people are already jittery about job security.

His other suggestion, that some of the economic stimulus money go towards oil companies, is completely ridiculous.

But his statements do show who he's concerned about consoling.

CANADA - BUDGET FORGET ABOUT TAX BREAKS

Economics is hardly a hard science, so just how much stimulus the Canadian economy needs is anyone's guess at this point.

But we're inclined to play it safe and ask the feds to earmark spending in their Jan. 27 budget for affordable housing projects and other social or building programs that need the money anyway — regardless of the economic situation.

Tax cuts for the middle class, on the other hand, have the potential to be really harmful. As economist Don Drummond of TD Bank told the *Ottawa Citizen*, the Americans tried a tax cut last spring, and it was a "really stupid" move, because people spent it on consumer goods, which were largely imported.

Clearly, that kind of solution won't help keep Canadians working. Worse, it decreases government revenue in the future, which inhibits its ability to fund other necessary programs.

BY THE NUMBERS

HEAD NORTHWEST, YOUNG PEOPLE!
MEDIAN AGE, BY PROVINCE
SOURCE: STATISTICS CANADA



COMMENTARY • U.S. POLITICS | 650 words

Dubya's Departure, Deconstructed



HIDDEN NINA FISH GRIWKOWSKI
THE END OF THE BUSH ERA MEANS WE DON'T HAVE TO ARGUE WITH COMPLETELY RETARDED PEOPLE ANYMORE

Stupefying and mentally survived only by rolling with the blackest humour since Christians were roasted alive inside Roman lion statues, the Bush era – oh, thank God – is actually fucking over. His departing speech was a halfhearted echo sloppily landfilled with aw-shucks anecdotes about how handicapped, long-suffering, systemically indoctrinated and literally brainwashed soldiers were his favourite people – though somehow Dubya didn't find the time to apologize for his administration's neglect and penny-pinching when it came to their pensions, their post-combat medical bills, and its seriously amazing lack of concern for their front-line equipment of war. Or, more importantly, for getting

so many of them killed for, um, what again?

But not so much mention of the Katrina thing, eh? Or the Gitmo torture. Or the wiretapping. Or the unregulated banking system. Or various contested ecological tipping points. Or anything that would have and did destroy Nixon, back when there was an actual "media" in place.

For GW, there was only so much time to talk, after all, as the hourglass ran out. Instead, among his final points: "9-11. 9-11." The very numbers looking, left to right, like a fat child's balloon released into the air as a far-off blip of a plane arrows towards double towers. Enough hot air, apparently, to melt un-struck Building 7, and Flight 93, and any mainstream discussion of how weird that all is – but let's not go there today.

The rare media tributes for Mr. Bush's legacy are utter nonsense like *Washington Post* editor Tara Wall's stunning attempt to, well, I can't even say what she's trying to get at, except "I'm bananas!" Headlining CNN.com, check it out: "The legacy Bush leaves behind won't be everything he wanted (particularly as it relates to popularity), but on many fronts, it will be better than that of

his predecessor. Bill Clinton may have been popular, but his moral failings brought shame on the office of the presidency and tainted the people's house.

"That will forever be a stain on Clinton's legacy. Not to mention, there was no such 'civility' or 'co-operation' when Clinton turned the keys over to Bush. I prefer principle over popularity any day."

"On the moral front, President Bush delivered. On the social front, he delivered. On the fiscal front, he failed considerably. Yet, on the national security front and on many domestic policies, he succeeded."

Uh. Seriously. That's my final counter-argument to this line of discussion: "Uh." Because, you and me, we really don't have to argue with completely retarded people anymore. No, really – that's what actually just happened. Starting this week, we no longer live in a world where phrases like "axis of evil" and "orange alert" are used to score nervous percentage points by the folks in de facto control of the free world. Where you'd even bother to argue back: "If your hero was so good for national security and domestic policies, why are most American streets so dangerous during the day and why, on one Sep-



We're Watching | North Americans are hopeful, but still watching Barack Obama's actions. PHOTO SUPPLIED

tember morn, was the World Trade Center an even worse place to be?" But there I go again. Shhhhhh. Don't justify it any more. Just let it go.

Would you like to join me in a moment of silence for this?

P.S.: We're watching you under a billion-eyed microscope, Mr. Obama, oversaturating ourselves. Why? Because you raised the bar and brought America back into the world with mantras, marketing and

merchandise alone – "hope" and "change" over "the" and "terrorists." Irrefutably, you seem to both know what century it is and how to form and explain an idea. It's too bad for us that this is surprising, but it's still a positive, empowering start. You seem to want people involved in the process, the discussion, the work, with a stake of their own. It's inspiring.

But is it real? There's that "hope" again. Do stay tuned.

COMMENTARY • U.S. POLITICS | 154 words

Bye-bye, Bush! We'll Miss The Jokes!



OUTSIDE POLITICS MAURICE TOUGAS
MAURICE TOUGAS PROVIDES A SNEAK PREVIEW OF THE FINAL CHAPTER OF GEORGE BUSH'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

To mark the end of the Bush era, SEE Magazine presents an exclusive preview of the final chapter of the unpublished autobiography of George W. Bush.

**GEORGE W. BUSH:
AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY BY ME**
Chapter 27: *The Last Days in the White House*

As my presidency came to its conclusionism, I found myself being unusually reflective. This was something new for me, as I've always been the kind of guy who makes a decision in a hurry, with or without facts, and never looked back. But with the steady hum of the shredding machines lulling me to sleep in the Oval Office, I began to think back upon the amazing journey that

landed me here.

How well I remember my Yale days, when I was in the secret Skull and Bones Society. There we were, just the Bonesmen, participating in the historical presidential selection rite. All the names of the Bonesmen were placed in the empty skull of William Howard Taft, the 27th president and the first to be chosen by the Bonesmen. Tradition states that the name of the Bonesman chosen from the Taft skull would eventually become president. When my name was chosen, well, I was beflabbergasted. I wasn't sure I wanted to be president, because it seemed like a lot of work and didn't pay very well. But once the skull had spoken, there was no turning back. I was going to be president, just like Poppy. The looks on the faces of the other Bonesmen was priceless.

Now my eight years as president have expired, and negative nellies have been asking me if I have any regrets. No, I do not. Regrets are for regretters. However, I did have some disappointments, which are not the same as regrets. Regrets are caused by something you did; disappointments are caused by something someone else did. So I had plenty of disappointments, but no regrets.

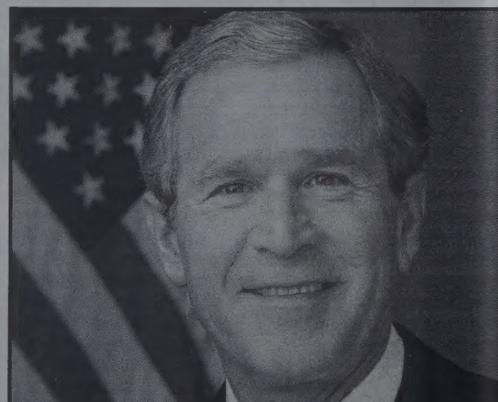
Iraq, for instance. I was very dis-

appointed that we went to all the trouble of launching an invasion to find those weapons of mass destruction, only to find there weren't any. Aside from those namby-pambies at the United Nations, who knew we wouldn't find any WMDs? Dick Cheney (I called him Darth Vader, because he was so cool) didn't seem at all surprised, but suggested that we could just plant some WMDs in Iraq, and offered to loan us a few from Halliburton's stockpile. But I said no, that wouldn't be honest. So, we just changed our aim. Instead of WMDs, we decided it was going to be a war to liberate Iraq from Saddam Hussein because of their involvement in 9/11. Nobody seemed to notice.

I was also disappointed that the economy ran into that rough patch back in 2008. But I took comfort in the knowledge that it wasn't in any way, shape, or form my fault.

I'm a true believer in the free market making its own decisions, and in the case of the 2008 correction, that was just the market making some multibillion dollar adjustments. The way I saw it, when I was elected in 2000 we were in a recession, and when I left we were in a recession. I call it a wash.

During my term, I cut taxes more than any other president. I believe



It's Over | The presidency of George W. Bush comes to its conclusionism. PHOTO SUPPLIED

that the taxpayer should decide what he or she wants to do with their money. Could the government have made good use of that tax money we gave back? Maybe. The Iraq war was more expensive than we expected – we were hoping for an in-and-out kinda thing, like when Reagan invaded Grenada – and it's unfortunate that the United States are now \$1 trillion in debt. But if I had a choice between paying off a debt or heated seats in an SUV, I'd go with the SUV ass-warmer any time. That's the

American way.

In the last days of my term, my approval rating was making history – it was at minus 12 per cent, which meant not only did people disapprove of me, they wished they could go back in time and vote against me. But it didn't bother me, because I knew it was the result of my decisionism. Other presidents tried to avoid the tough decisions, but I made them. I was the decider.

Yep. Mission accomplished.

mauricetougas@live.com

city life

PROFILE · LOCAL ROYALS · BY MARLISS WEBER | 973 words

The Vaginaless Monologues

IN THE TWO DECADES HE'S SPENT IN DRESSES AND MAKEUP, DARRIN HAGEN HAS SEEN THE FACE OF THIS REDNECK TOWN CHANGE

THE EDMONTON QUEEN: THE FINAL VOYAGE

Westbury Theatre, TransAlta Arts Barns (10330-84 Ave). Jan 22-Feb 1. Tickets available through Fringe Theatre Adventures (409-1910).

Darrin Hagen and I have a lot in common.

We both love accessories ("It's always about the accessories, isn't it?"), big hair, and pointy-toed stilettos. We both marvel at the shine of gold lamé, love the floaty swish-swish of marabou, and dish about our best-loved Streisand tunes.

These are a few of our favourite things, and to horribly mix musical theatre metaphors, I enjoy being a girl. And so does he.

Darrin Hagen is Edmonton's Queen. Well, perhaps its queenliest Queen, and he has ruled the roost (so to speak) for more than 20 years. He began as the star of drag acts in the city's gay bars and moved from success within the confines of the queer community to taking the city and the country by storm, performing with his troupe Guys in Disguise to great acclaim in mainstream theatres across the country.

Now 44, Hagen has written a book and several plays, has hosted two television series, and speaks regularly about his gender-bending experiences to audiences of all kinds, from MacEwan College nursing students to members of the gay community to Joe and Edna from Wetaskiwin, who are simply amused by the gag of seeing a guy in a dress.

But Hagen's experience as a drag performer goes deeper than the glitz of his costumes and the weight of his pancake makeup (to cover the ever-present beard). Hagen has

straddled many worlds throughout his career, and as a result, he has a unique perspective on what it means to be a man, a woman, and an Edmontonian.

"I actually moved here to be a musician," Hagen recalls. "But then I saw my first drag show, and that was the end of that." For a boy from Rocky Mountain House, Edmonton, with its vibrant arts scene and colorful gay community, was the promised land, although Hagen didn't intend to stay for long. "I was sure I'd head out to Vancouver or some place else at some point, but Edmonton became part of me. I got so mad when people paint this town with the brush of 'Oh, redneck oil town.' I mean, sure, there's an element of that here, but it goes so much further. I'm glad I stayed."

In the early years, Hagen was a regular at Flashback, Edmonton's most renowned (and notorious) nightclub. "That was my family," he says. "That's where I met my drag mama, that's where I found acceptance for the first time and got my start. I have tremendously fond feelings for that place. And in those days, I could dance all night in seven-inch stilettos."

It was in 1987 that Hagen took his stilettos to the street and found success outside the club scene. "I was like, 'What's a Fringe?' But we entered anyway, and we were a smash hit that year." And so his company, Guys in Disguise, entered the mainstream consciousness, and has been a Fringe (and not-so-fringe) staple ever since.

"Amazingly, the city was ready for us," Hagen says. "They loved us! And of course it was okay for guys to dress up like girls for 10 days during the summer. Everything was okay if you were part of an act."

Hagen found a home on Edmonton's stages and his acting experi-

ences have led him to question the impact he has on his audiences. "I always found it interesting to watch the straight men in the audience," he notes. "It's a drag queen's job to try to embody the ideals of feminine beauty, or at least a very rigid ideal. I always wondered if there was a little piece of any of those straight guys who were attracted to me. And if any of them ever went home a little confused."

Hagen himself is far from confused, and despite his love affair with sequins and eyeshadow, he feels that drag has taught him much about being a man. "For one thing," he jests, "I've learned how to handle pain. No man can know pain worse than wearing stilettos for hours on end." But he feels that drag has allowed him to explore his strength – of character, of will – and grow into being a man he's proud of: "I learned to stand up for myself, and to call it as I see it. And to be true to myself. Drag taught me that."

And he shares many feminine tears as well. "I can't help but feel like my body has betrayed me," he says, suddenly serious. "I was beautiful when I was 17. Tall and thin, and I'd just have to brush my own hair and I was ready for the stage. Now I look like a truck driver in a dress."

Hagen does have a strong masculine presence. Handsome in jeans and a sweater, with just a touch of stubble, he's the last person in the room I'd expect to be swapping high-heel horror stories and sharing beauty tips. But perhaps it's this very quality that makes him so successful both onstage and off as an ambassador for gender equality.

"I've spoken at schools and had women thank me for making them feel validated, for feeling good about being feminine," he says. "I take great strength from that."

I ask him if he thinks the taboo

“ I LEARNED TO STAND UP FOR MYSELF, AND TO CALL IT AS I SEE IT. AND TO BE TRUE TO MYSELF. DRAG TAUGHT ME THAT.



Then & Now | Among other things, wisdom comes with age. PHOTOS BY IAN JACKSON

will ever be broken, if the fabric worn on the lower halves of our bodies will ever cease to define us. He pauses, and shakes his head. "I hope so, but it's going to take a very, very long time. We're fighting millennia here."

But hey, a girl's gotta dream.

anderson

VERB · To enshrine every part of your professional life in a depraved anecdote, and then be given an award. "I knew I was going to be andersoned after someone told me that I was banned from the petting zoo for 'being too aggressive with the animals.' I then won third prize in a mustache-growing competition. I grew it on my neck."

earthflirt

NOUN · A small glimpse of nice weather bookended by wintry hell. "I was so busy yelling at my stupid pets that I missed the earthflirt. They are really stupid."

tattoddler

NOUN · A person who defines themselves through their body art. "The sparrows on my neck mean I'm mysterious, the dolphin on my ankle means I'm pure, and the burning otter driving a bulldozer into a river full of giant dental moulds means that I'm environmentally conscious and sometimes constipated. Did you just cough 'tattoddler'?"

undiglams

NOUN · Fashionable underwear for men. "My undiglams are hot pink boxers with the words 'let's do the sex' across the ass, a transparent plastic window in the crotch, and what seem to be bear bells all around the waistband, which is made out of Fruit Roll-Ups. The only thing I don't like about them is the way they make my penis look like it's trapped in a capsized glass-bottomed boat."

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IMBIBING • WINE WARS | 185 words

The Syrah That Stirs The Drink



BOOZE MUSE MELISSA PRIESTLEY
SYRAH VS. SHIRAZ: IT'S AN AGE-OLD DEBATE. BUT DOES ANYONE REALLY CARE WHAT THE DIFFERENCE IS?

Yeah, yeah, I've heard it all: you say Syrah, I say Shiraz – it's the grape with multiple personality disorder.

Please, let's not psychoanalyze grape varieties, even if it makes for tepid wine-writing metaphors. Multiple personality disorder belongs in a Joanne Woodward movie, not a wine discussion.

Still, there's no denying that there is a Syrah/Shiraz dichotomy. Here's what you need to know about it. It's

ers slap "Shiraz" on their labels in order to try and cash in on this popularity.

Scene-select to 2009. There is a shitload of Syrah, Shiraz, whatever, on liquor store shelves, and not just the stuff from France or Australia. But Aussie Shiraz ain't such a good deal anymore. They made their millions (probably closer to billions, actually) by pimping the same style for years, steadily increasing the price without increasing the quality. Sure you can still find a decent bottle of Aussie Shiraz for less than \$20. But for \$10? Not likely.

You are much more likely to find a cheap and tasty Syrah/Shiraz wine from one of the New World regions: Canada, South Africa, Chile, Argentina. In these countries, the lines of naming dissolve into each other; it's not uncommon to see a bottle of Canadian Shiraz sitting next to a Canadian Syrah, for example. I like to think that the choice of name re-

tion often has a streak of pepper at the end of the palate – in fact, this is my blind-tasting trigger for Rhône Shiraz. These wines also tend to have black fruit primary aromas, tempered by secondary layers of earth, smoke, chocolate, spice, and often a stinky barnyard element. The tannins tend to be quite prominent, but there is usually enough acidity to counterbalance them.

Flip to the other side of the globe, and you'll land among the kangaroos and wallabies in Shiraz's home away from home, Australia. Under the banner of Shiraz, the vines have proliferated throughout the entire country, though the quintessential versions come from the Barossa and Hunter Valleys and McLaren Vale.

Again, all too often Aussie Shiraz is one-dimensional and unabashedly fruity – not necessarily a bad thing, but something that does get tiresome after a while. These wines also tend

**SO WHY ALL THE POOH-POOH ABOUT SYRAH AND SHIRAZ?
ONE WORD, BABY: MARKETING. SYRAH IS FRENCH, SO IT SOUNDS,
LIKE, ALL SOPHISTICATED AND SHIT. PRODUCERS SLAP IT
ON THEIR LABELS IN THE HOPES OF SELLING MORE BOTTLES.**

the same damn thing. Every grape variety in the world has dozens of synonyms from different languages, regions, cultures, etc.

So why all the pooh-pooh about Syrah and Shiraz? One word, baby: marketing. Syrah is French, so it sounds like, all sophisticated and shit. Producers slap it on their labels in the hopes of selling more bottles.

As for Shiraz, well, it's the entire basis for the fantastic success of Australian wine. They took Syrah, renamed it, and changed the style to something crowd-pleasingly fruity – then churned out oceans of the stuff and sold it for dirt cheap. As a result, a few years ago Aussie Shiraz was the de facto choice for your everyday chuggin' wine. Again, other produc-

flects the style of the wine; after all, wouldn't it make sense to name a big gooey fruit bomb Shiraz, and call a peppery, leather-gloved wine Syrah? Probably. But it doesn't always happen, so proceed with caution and know that the style doesn't always align with the name.

Official sources cite the origin of the Syrah grape as the Rhône Valley in France. However, others point out that there is a city of Shiraz in Iran, where a famous wine called Shirazi was produced in times past. They speculate that the grape originated here and was then brought to the Rhône Valley. Shiraz is known as the city of wine, flowers, and poets – not a bad hometown for a grape.

But while Iran is much closer to the birthplace of the vitis vinifera species (around the Black Sea area) than the Rhône, still other crusty scholars point to evidence that Shirazi wine was white – so it obviously wasn't our inky dark Shiraz.

Whatever the real origins may be, archetypal Syrah hails from the Rhône – specifically from the northern Rhône. There is a bit of 100 per cent Syrah from here, but most wines are a blend, with Syrah holding the majority over other common Rhône varieties like Grenache and Mourvèdre. Hermitage, Cornas, Côte-Rôtie. Syrah ranges wildly in aroma and flavour, though the Rhône incarna-

to see a lot of oak, which contributes flavours of vanilla, caramel, and baking spices.

However, Australia is a big country and there are several cooler-climate wine regions that have produced Shiraz with more restrained fruit – check out the offerings from Coonawarra and Clare Valley.

Syrah's popularity in its home territory of France and adopted home Australia have led producers worldwide to plant it in profusion. The vine needs a warmer climate to flourish, so the offerings from South Africa, Chile, and Argentina are usually pretty good, and often very well-priced.

Pearl the Old World style of Syrah with anything meaty and grilled – steaks, sausage, burgers, and the like. Red meat tends to work best. The fruitier New World styles of Shiraz are more difficult to pair with food, as the flavours are often overwhelmingly intense – and often almost sweet, to boot.

I've had a modicum of success pairing Aussie Shiraz with grilled meats doused in sweet barbecue sauce, as well as pub staples such as teriyaki chicken wings. But most find Shiraz fairly easy to quaff on its own. Just remember to pack your toothbrush – a few glasses of this stuff and you can make an admirable stand-in for Bozo the Clown.

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DINING • PORTUGUESE • BY SCOTT LINGLEY (841 words)

A Sabor Too Divino To Resist

**GOOD FOOD, GOOD WINE,
GOOD GOD – I'VE SPILLED
IT ALL OVER MY CO-DINER,
AND FALLEN OFF THE SELF-
CONTROL WAGON**

SABOR DIVINO
10220-103 St., 780-757-4114

Did pretty well in 2009: I made it all the way to Jan. 16 before tumbling off the high horse of staunch declarations to myself that the year ahead would be characterized by more self-

tossed with a diced peppers and onions didn't achieve the same positive consensus, but I especially found the octopus to be attractively seasoned and prepared, substantial but not at all rubbery. The others, they missed out.

More wine, more bread, Mena dropped by to welcome us, our own hilarious chatter gained volume. Then, the hushed awe that arrives with the first entrées – broiled bacalhau (\$28) lurking beneath a heap of roasted peppers, onions, whole



The Wine Is Good, Too Good | And the food is rich. Sabor Divino lives up to its name. PHOTO BY JOHN LIAN

THE TAB: \$150 FOR FOUR (FOOD ONLY)

THE GIST: TASTY, TASTEFUL PORTUGUESE PAMPERING

TRY: THE PORK AND CLAMS (\$28)

AVOID: THE SOUTH WALL AFTER 10 P.M. ON WEEKENDS

control – a hair more composure, if you will, in the face of temptation. It took only the appearance of a smart new restaurant in the heart of downtown to undo me.

I should add that it wasn't just any restaurant but Sabor Divino – "dine-vine taste" in both Spanish and Portuguese – and the prospect of delicacies from the Iberian peninsula that broke my resolve. Cruising the menu one day, I saw not only a piedra of Portuguese favourites but shades of Spain and Italy as well. A plan was then hatched – if I was going down, I was taking at least three other people with me.

Sabor Divino resides in a welcoming open space in the Boardwalk Market building, with exposed brick, rich drapery, and discreet ambient touches – a live classical guitarist, for instance – that make it feel like there's more going on than just the distribution of food. Friday night found it a little underpatronized but somehow lively, with music heartthrob-turned-restaurateur Chris(tian) Mena stepping up to the mic beside the guitarist a couple of times through the night to croon Elton and Wonder.

Maybe it was the slowish night, but we sure had the undivided attention of our loquacious server, who chided us at one point for filling our glasses without his help. It must have felt like a special occasion because we went through two bottles of vinho tinto over appetizers and entrées – good Portuguese food calls for good Portuguese wine, after all.

And bread. And olives. Both were presented for us to nibble as we awaited the decadent-sounding dishes we'd elected for our meal. First up, the Basque tuna tartar (\$18) – three generous scoops of minced sushi-grade tuna mixed with diced peppers, onions, chives, and parsley, a refreshing herbal contrast to the silken raw fish. Alongside that, the marinated octopus and mussels appetizer (\$15)

cloves of garlic, and olives; and baked bacalhau enveloped by white wine-cream sauce streamered with carrots and leeks. Then the vibrant pimento red of the pork and clams (\$28), a traditional Portuguese preparation, and my feast of grilled calamari and prawns (\$24) arrayed over a mound of rich white-bean purée, encircled in a rill of extra virgin olive oil and a perimeter guard of chouriço rounds.

My tastebuds wept with joy.

Here's where my memory really betrays me, because I felt like I was eating freely off everyone else's plates and the onslaught of gustatory

delights is a bit of a blur. I'll scrape together what I can for you – the pork tenderloin melted in my mouth as no porco à alentejana ever has and the clams were juicy plum; the salt-

ed cod in cream sauce filled me with envy, but the broiled bacalhau had a more full-on cod flavour and, thus, more salt. The opaque bulbs of grilled

SABOR DIVINO cont'd pg. 14

TOP 10 RINGTONES

| | |
|----|----------------------------------|
| 1 | Heartless, Kanye West |
| 2 | Poker Face, Lady GaGa |
| 3 | I'm So Paid, Akon |
| 4 | Live Your Life, T.I. ft. Rihanna |
| 5 | Right Now (Na Na Na), Akon |
| 6 | Single Ladies, Beyoncé |
| 7 | Love Story, Taylor Swift |
| 8 | Hot N Cold, Katy Perry |
| 9 | Rock N'Roll Train, AC/DC |
| 10 | Circus, Britney Spears |

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RESTO CAPS • RECENTLY REVIEWED • BY SCOTT LINGLEY

ACCENT EUROPEAN LOUNGE

8223-104 St., 780-431-0179

THE TAB: \$51 for two (food only)**THE GIST:** As ever, a Euro-comfort food landmark**TRY:** The steak tartar (\$14)**AVOID:** Strenuous post-dining activity

COLONEL MUSTARD'S CANTEEN

10802-124 St., 780-488-1590

THE TAB: \$41 for two (food only)**THE GIST:** Multi-hued sandwich joint does gourmet dinner**TRY:** Caramelized onion and roasted tomato pizza (\$12)

THE COPPER POT

101, 9707-110 St., 452-7800

THE TAB: \$67 for two (food only)**THE GIST:** Fabulous new menu; great view.

a casual-fancy night out

TRY: Braised Bison Short Ribs and House Made Duck Sausage (\$30)**AVOID:** The politicians

EL RANCHO SPANISH RESTAURANT

11810-87 St., 780-471-4930

THE TAB: \$33 for two (food only)**THE GIST:** Solid Mexi-Salvadorean fare; nice room; indifferent service.**TRY:** The Enchilada Mexicana**BEWARE:** Mathematical errors

THE HAT RESTO PUB

10271 Jasper Ave., 780-429-4471

THE TAB: \$42.95 for three (food only)**THE GIST:** Edmonton greasy-spoon landmark goes upscale**TRY:** The Burgers!**BEWARE:** The sticker shock.

FANTASIA NOODLE HOUSE

10518 Jasper Ave., 780-428-0943

THE TAB: \$17.40 for two (food only)**THE GIST:** Serviceable Vietnamese fare if you can't make it to Chinatown**TRY:** The Daily Special!**AVOID:** Looking at it too closely.

MASALAZ

4218-66 St., 780-484-0582

THE TAB: \$28 for two (food only)**THE GIST:** Affordable, authentic south Indian cuisine; strip-mall ambience**TRY:** The masala dosa with sambar (\$6.99)**AVOID:** The table near the entrance

MUCHO BURRITO FRESH MEXICAN GRILL

10124-109 St., 780-429-4220

THE TAB: \$8.48 (food only)**THE GIST:** You were expecting fancy, maybe?**TRY:** The burrito**AVOID:** The lunch rush

PIZZERIA PREGO

5860-111 St., 780-439-7734

THE TAB: \$19.49 (12-inch loaded pizza)**THE GIST:** Hand-crafted pizza in a class of its own**TRY:** The salads.

SUSHI WASABI

5714-111 St., 780-433-0533

THE TAB: \$50 for two (food only)**THE GIST:** Piece for piece, the best raw fish in town**TRY:** The assorted sushi or sashimi**AVOID:** The construction on 111th Street

THAI ORCHID

4005 Gateway Blvd., 780-438-3344

THE TAB: \$63 for three people (food only)**THE GIST:** Delicious, if not overly generous, hidden Thai gem**TRY:** The green curry with chicken (\$12.95) with coconut rice (\$3.99)

ZEN SHABU SHABU SUSHI & GRILL

10518-101 St., 780-428-1235

THE TAB: \$50 for two (food only)**THE GIST:** All-you-can-eat sushi with the expected tradeoffs**TRY:** The salmon and tuna sushi**AVOID:** The men's room

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PLANET ORGANIC

SABOR DIVINO (cont'd from pg. 13)

calamari and enormous prawns, dredged through the garlicky bean purée and chased with spicy sausage slices, pleased my teeth and tongue so much that I couldn't have chewed faster if I had wanted to.

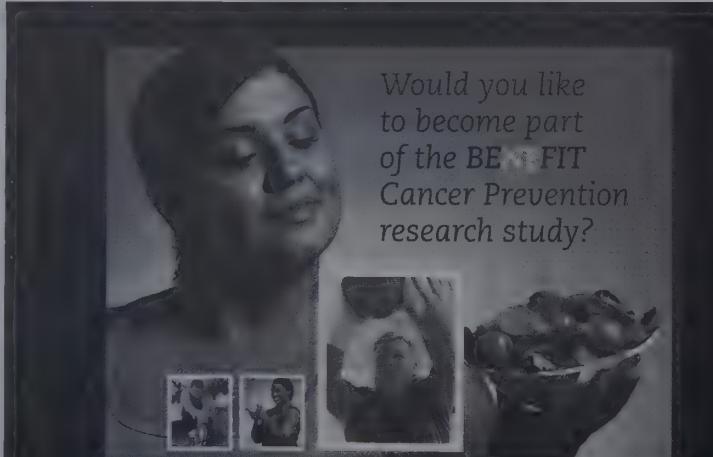
Next, the refractory period — an Americano or latte and a jolt of sugar to set my composure back on course after saying the phrase "rubber vagina" a bit too loud, then showering my right-hand co-diner with wine. Our eager server was there in a flash, dabbing the spattered vestments with

club soda.

Sabor Divino, in acknowledgment of the fact that you probably just had a surpassingly rich meal, thoughtfully offers their desserts in "Temptation" size (\$3) — a chance to sample the sweets without exceeding capacity. I was tempted into a taster of the chocolate-cayenne mousse, while two of my co-diners split the leite crème "Dona Irene" (\$7), a sort of Portuguese crème brûlée. The dark mousse so beguiled the palate with chocolate that it took a moment

to notice the touch of cayenne pepper tingling the nerve endings. It was delicious, but I'm not sure I could have eaten much more than the portion I got.

A glass of port, farewells amid the mounting bass-spun of dance music from the nightclub next door, and a stroll through the unseasonably warm night and home. As tumbles off the wagon go, it was pretty painless, and in just the right venue for a healthy bit of self-indulgence if off-set the drudgery of restraint.



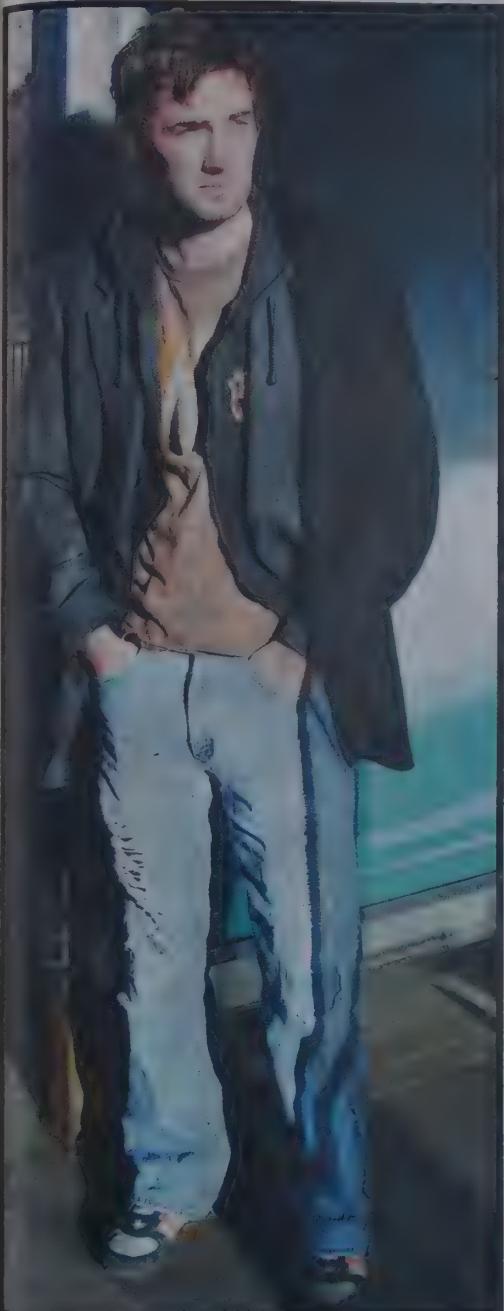
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myLook

Michael Whidden | Faithful SEE Reader

My Look: Thrifty public transit glamour model.

Wearing: My haircut was done by my wife, the Cambridge sports coat was lifted from Dad's closet, this Kokanee hoodie was won at a bar and my wife sewed on an old NHL logo. The Big Lebowski T-shirt was purchased on eBay, these Levi's jeans are probably 10 years old (I purchased them new without holes). My shoes are from Spring and not coincidentally, the colours are copper and blue.

Into: Music (U2 and Ryan Adams especially), the Oilers, hockey pools, films and television, the NDP and politics, and I just took up tennis last summer.

Wanna be in MyLook? Send your photo to style@see.greatwest.ca.

HIGHLIGHT • FAME



Ex-Pats | Comedian Jim Carey is one of many Canadians who found it necessary to leave their home country in order to pursue a showbiz career. PHOTO SUPPLIED

A Canadian Star System: Pipe Dreams or Possibility?

• Jan. 22 • Stanley A. Milner Library

Assistant Prof. Liz Czach from the University of Alberta's department of English & Film Studies discusses the nature of celebrity in Canada.

EVENTS

A CANADIAN STAR SYSTEM: PIPE DREAM OR POSSIBILITY? STANLEY A. MILNER LIBRARY, #11 SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL SQUARE, JAN. 22 A discussion about Canadian film celebrities, featuring the insights of Assistant Professor Liz Czach from the Department of English & Film Studies at the U of A. Doors at 12:05 p.m.

AN EVENING OF POETRY UPPER CRUST CAFE, 10909 86TH AVE., JAN. 26 With local spoken word artists Verna Conti, Hugh McLennan, Ray Rasmussen, Julie Robinson and Rebecca Pickard. Doors at 7 p.m.

ARTS MARKET THE CARROT COMMUNITY ARTS CO-OP FEEDHOUSE, 9351 18TH AVE., JAN. 20 Artists and artisans from the community and beyond, sharing unique gifts with local flavour. From 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Info: www.thecarrot.ca

CONNIE MASSING STANLEY A. MILNER LIBRARY, #7 SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL SQUARE, JAN. 25 The award-winning playwright and screenwriter with numerous credits in theatre, film, television and radio joins the Edmonton Public Library as part of its Writer's Corner series.

DISNEY'S HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL: THE ICE TOUR REXALL PLACE, 2424 118 AVE., JAN. 23 Doors at 7 p.m.

FAMILY LITERACY DAY WORLD RECORD ATTEMPT CITY HALL, #11 SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL SQUARE, JAN. 24 The Centre for Family Literacy hopes to break the Guinness World Record for most adults and children reading together. From 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.

FREE FAMILY ART NIGHTS NINA HAGERTY CENTRE, 9704 111TH AVE., JAN. 8 For parents and children up to 17.

Doors at 6:30 p.m. Info: 780-474-7611.

THE HORIZON AS IT SHOULD BE — PERSPECTIVE DRAWING

#101 ART GALLERY OF ALBERTA, #100 10230 JASPER AVE., FEB. 26 Lee Ball, AGO School Programs Coordinator, speaks as part of Art for Lunch. Doors at 12:10 p.m.

ICE ON WHYTE FESTIVAL PARK, 104TH ST. & 85TH AVE., JAN. 15 JAN. 25 Sixth annual ice sculpture exhibit.

IMAGINING SCIENCE IDEA-EXCHANGE SALT GALLERY OF ALBERTA, #100 10230 JASPER AVE., JAN. 22 Mike Spear, Director of Communications, Genome Alberta joins AGA curators to lead a tour through exhibition of art and science.

Doors at 7 p.m.

LYNN COADY UPPER CRUST CAFE, 10909 86TH AVE., JAN. 28 Award-winning author shares her expertise on creating character and discusses the relationship between character and dialogue, using her favourite literary characters as examples. Doors at 7 p.m.

MUSIC LAW AND CONTRACTS BRIX BAR & GRILL, 102ND ST., JAN. 27 The Alberta Music Industry Association hosts an information session on music law and contracts with a panel of special guests from the business side of the music industry. Doors at 6 p.m.

SILVER SKATE HAWRELAK PARK, 9380 GREAT RD., FEB. 11, JAN. 22 The longest running outdoor winter festival in Edmonton. Kick off at City Hall. Three days of skating. Info: www.winterlight.ca.

WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM GANDHI: RESOLVING THE PALESTINE-ISRAEL CONFLICT UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA CAMPUS, JAN. 22 Lecture by Norman Finkelstein, ETLC (Engineering Teaching and Learning Complex), Room E1-07. Doors at 7:30 p.m.

WORLD OF STORY — TOAD IS THE UNCLE OF HEAVEN CITY HALL, #11 SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL SQUARE, JAN. 22 A multilingual celebration of storytelling hosted by Maria Oryszuk. From 10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m. and 1:00-3:00 p.m.

QUEER

AGAPE EDUCATION FACULTY, #101 A CAMPUS Focus group on sex and gender differences in education and culture.

Pre-service and practicing teachers, community members welcome. Info: andre.grace@ualberta.ca or 780-492-0772.

BISEXUAL WOMEN'S COFFEE GROUP A social group for bi-curious and bisexual women. Every 2nd Thu of the month, 7:30 p.m. Info: groups.yahoo.com/group/tweedmonton.

EDMONTON PRIME TIMES UNITARIAN CHURCH OF EDMONTON, 10084 101ST ST. Older gay men and admires meet for a social gathering, short business meeting, followed by guest speaker, discussion panel, or potluck supper. Every 2nd Sun of the month, 2:30 p.m. Info: www.pmtimerswsw.org/edmonton.

EDMONTON RAINBOW BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

THE CARRIAGE COMMUNITY ARTS COFFEEHOUSE, 9351 18TH AVE. Casual networking with GLBT business community.

2nd Wednesday every month. Locations listed on www.edmononba.org.

EPS/LGBTQ LIASON COMMITTEE The EPS/LGBTQ Liaison Committee is composed of a variety of concerned (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-identified, two-spirited, queer, allied community members, and police officers. E-mail questions or concerns to eps@lgbtq@yahoo.ca. All inquiries treated with confidentiality and respect. To report a hate or bias motivated crime, contact the EPS Hate & Bias Crime Unit, 780-427-3489.

FREE TO BE INTERMEDIATE VOLLEYBALL 8-10 p.m. 101 Amiskwaciy Academy Info: volleyball@teammedmonton.ca.

GAY WIRE MORANGO'S CAFE, 10118 97TH ST. 5 p.m. CJR 88.5 FM Edmonton's only radio show concerning gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered lives. News, local and international features, and community events.

HIV SUPPORT GROUP PRIDE CENTRE, 9540 111TH AVE. 2nd Monday every month from 7-9 p.m. Info: nichard@pridecentreedmonton.org 780-488-3234.

INSIDE/OUT #101 A Campus-based organization for LGBTQ faculty, graduates, academic & staff. Straight allies welcome. Monthly meetings. Info: kwell@ualberta.ca or mwondham@ualberta.ca

PRIDE CENTRE 9540 111 AVE., 780-488-3234. Hours: TUE-FRI 11-10 p.m., SAT 12-6:30 p.m. Drop-in, library, and community Internet services are available. Online newsletter hours: TUE-FRI 1-10 p.m., SAT 12-6:30 p.m. Info: 780-488-3234 or www.pridecentreedmonton.org.

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January 27 - 6:30 p.m.

Room 436

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"WHEN YOU GET TO A POINT WHERE YOU ARE **GETTING TOO BIG**, THE KIDS ARE QUICK TO THROW OUT THE WORD 'SELLOUT'."

MUSIC PREVIEW • QUASI-ROCK • BY TREV WILKIE | 628 words

If You're Anberlin, Then Who Am I?

**CHRISTIAN ROCKERS
ANBERLIN HAVE DONE SOME SERIOUS SOUL-SEARCHING SINCE SIGNING TO A MAJOR LABEL**

ANBERLIN

w/ Madina Lake and In Between the Trees. Starlite Room (10090-102 St.), Sun., Jan. 25 (7pm). Tickets: \$18, available through Ticketmaster (451-8000/ticketmaster.ca).

Identity is a major issue in everyone's life. Who are we? What are we doing here? What do other people think of us?

For Nathan Young, the drummer for quasi-Christian punk/modern rock band Anberlin as well as owner of his own "art company," being in Anberlin has changed who he is.

"I was very young when I started touring with the band, so definitely I've changed," Young begins. "You know, you grow up and you live and you learn and you make mistakes and hopefully make the best of them and grow into the person you are supposed to be. We've all grown together and grown separately, if you know what I mean."

It doesn't stop there. The name Anberlin itself is without definition. It could be a girl's name or it could be a practical joke. In fact, the band's aptly named lead singer Stephen Christian once told an interviewer that when they came up with the name, each band member created their own fictitious answer to what the name meant.

Their current album, *New Surrender*, is similarly shrouded in mystery. Trying to identify with Anberlin is like trying to identify with something that is in a constant state of flux.

"There are fans that are very sensitive and very passionate towards us," Young says. "It gets to the point



They Love You Until You're Popular | So it goes in rock, much like the stickiness of high school cliques. PHOTO SUPPLIED

where they don't want us to get any bigger or grow because we would be come less their band. It's sort of an 'It's our music we don't want to share it' type of thing. It's definitely a good problem.

"People want a meaning for everything; every word, every chord played. We just want every lyric or song title to be positive and it's not going to give the wrong impression about us and what we are trying to portray."

Indeed, many of Anberlin's fans

who were there from the start, have rejected the changes the band has undergone — especially their decision to sign to Universal a few years back. "The kids only want you to do well to a certain extent," Young says. "When you get to a point where you are getting too big, they are quick to throw out the word 'sellout.' For some reason, people think that when a band signs to a major label, they are sellouts and are making tons of money. But the way the music industry is right now, that's not the case at

all. It was kind of a gamble and risk for us to go to Universal because, you know, you hear the horror stories about major labels ... they'll drop you or they'll control your music. But that wasn't the case with us. I think what it's come down to is people are realizing that they'd rather us be sellouts and put out more records than not sign with a new label and be broke and done."

If you ever change from one thing to another, say from indie to signed, the backlash is quick and sharp. Sec-

ular, sinner, poseur ... Anberlin has heard it all.

"I think we are a mixture of a lot of stuff, actually," Young says. "It's pretty hard to pinpoint just one thing. We are definitely not a Christian rock band — we don't play churches, we aren't on a Christian label. Yes, we are all Christians and we all have faith and that is what we are, but the thing is, we feel that we're called to go out and play ... not churches and not that segregated thing."



Crabby | The Faunts will play king of the sandcastle at the Likwid Lounge on Friday. PHOTO SUPPLIED

HOT TICKETS • MUST-SEE SHOWS

TYPE CAST

Faunts

Likwid Lounge • Jan. 29
\$5 | At the door

These guys might get their kicks from watching crabs dismember each other with spears and pincers, but since they're one of Edmonton's hottest musical exports, we'll forgive their affection for animal cruelty — *this time*. Since the release of their debut album *High Expectations/Low Results* in 2005, the quintet's crustacean-filled video was featured on BioWare's videogame *Mass Effect* and now they're getting set to release their newest disc, *Feel.Love.Thinking.Of.*, which should be appearing on shelves in February.

ULL LOVER

DJ Samantha Ronson
Bank Ultra Lounge • Jan. 24
\$10 | At the door

Let's leave aside the obvious snarky comments about this London-born DJ's love affair with Lindsay Lohan, shall we? After all, there's so much else to talk about! Ronson comes from a musical family and thanks to her brother, famed DJ Mark Ronson — in fact, little Sam began playing regular club gigs while her big brother took some time off to finish up his album. We suppose it also didn't hurt that her stepfather was Foreigner's own Mick Jones. With a little luck, could Ronson become her generation's jukebox hero?

NEW SUIT

The Rumble Strippers
Black Dog • Jan. 29
Free

Papa's got a brand new suit — again! It wasn't so long ago that Fat Dave of the Crime Wave started up The Fat Dave Sound Wave to put forth a more mellow groove. But since becoming a proud pop last year, old Dave Johnston's been feeling a little more of the collaborative love lately. So he's started up The Rumble Strippers (we hear it's yet another incarnation of the tried and true blues outfit we've come to know and love, just with more love to go around for the rest of the band). Now isn't that nice?

MUSIC PREVIEW • LOCAL HEROES • BY MIKE DEANE | 100 words

Our Very Own E-Street Band



Everybody Gets Their 10 Seconds | Edmonton's Ten Second Epic haven't ridden out their fame yet. PHOTO SUPPLIED

WITH THEIR SECOND FULL-LENGTH READY TO DROP, EDMONTON'S TEN SECOND EPIC RETURNS HOME

TEN SECOND EPIC

w/ Theory Of A Deadman. Edmonton Event Centre (WEM). Sat. Jan 24 (8pm). Tickets: \$29.50, available through Ticketmaster (451-8000/ticketmaster.ca).

Ten Second Epic are hometown boys and proud of it. But the pressures and responsibilities of an increasingly successful music career often keeps them away from the town they love. They're about to release their second full-length for Toronto's Black Box Recordings, and while on the road supporting their upcoming release, *Hometown*, they manage to spread their Edmonton pride across Canada. From Toronto, at the beginning of the tour, guitarist Craig

of wherever you're from. You meet people in certain circles who don't want to admit they're from this small town or that small town, but it's like, 'Fuck it: that's your home and that's where the people are who mean the most to you, and there's never any shame in that.'

Being from Edmonton certainly hasn't hindered the band's popularity; their debut album, *Count Yourself In*, spawned a string of hits on MuchMusic, gaining them national attention. With a new album there must be pressure to deliver another success, but the band took it as an opportunity to branch out and focus on aspects of their music they find more important. "This release is way more thought out," Spelliscy says. "We had ample time to do everything that we had wanted to do on the last record – things we didn't

three days before its official release date. And Spelliscy says there are some surprises in store when people listen to it: "What we wanted to do with the record itself was just give people something different. We didn't want to stay stuck in our ways. We embraced all of the influences and everything that was happening all around us, and put out something that's way more diverse than our last record."

And what if people don't like these changes? For Spelliscy it doesn't seem to be a problem: "We just want to write songs that we like and we enjoy, and people will either join us on that ride or get off at the next stop and either way that's fine for us."

While writing the album, Ten Second Epic spent six months in Edmonton, their longest stay in years. Once the writing was finished, they

"WHAT WE MISS MOST ABOUT EDMONTON," SPELLISCY SAYS, "IS BEING ABLE TO WATCH THE OILERS IN A BAR WITHOUT HAVING SOME GUY YELLING AT YOU. IT'S KIND OF A FAUX PAS IN TORONTO TO GO INTO A BAR AND DEMAND THAT THEY PUT ON THE OILERS GAME."

Spelliscy explains that even though Edmonton serves as *Hometown's* muse, the album isn't completely "E-centric."

"I don't think it's about Edmonton specifically," he begins, "but Edmonton's definitely always an inspiration for us. It's something we tell people from all over the country: We're this band and we're not from Montreal, we're not from Toronto, we're from Edmonton. It's not so much an ode to Edmonton, but it's having that pride

to have the time or money to do. For us, to sit down with all of the instruments and all the help we had at our disposal, it was just awesome to have the freedom to do what we wanted. The whole experience was a lot more relaxed and a lot more focused."

Fans nationwide will have to wait to see how the album sounds when it's released on Jan. 27, but Edmonton gets special treatment as Ten Second Epic will have the album for sale when they come through town

traveled to British Columbia to record it and now that it's about to drop, the road will again become their home. With such a dedication to their hometown, spending so much time away does take its toll. "What we miss most about Edmonton," Spelliscy says, "is being able to watch the Oilers in a bar without having some guy yelling at you. It's kind of a faux pas in Toronto to go into a bar and demand that they put on the Oilers game."

MUSIC PREVIEW • **DIV STAR** • BY TRENT WILKIE (503 words)

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MONDAY TO SUNDAY OPEN AT 11:30 AM

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Biting The Hand That Feeds You Can Hurt

ESPECIALLY IF IT'S YOUR OWN HAND. BUT SECONDHAND SERENADE IS WILLING TO CHOMP HARD TO GET WHAT HE WANTS

SECONDHAND SERENADE

Starlite Room (10030-102 St.), Fri. Jan 23 (5:30pm).
Tickets: \$20, available through Ticketmaster (451-8000/ticketmaster.ca).

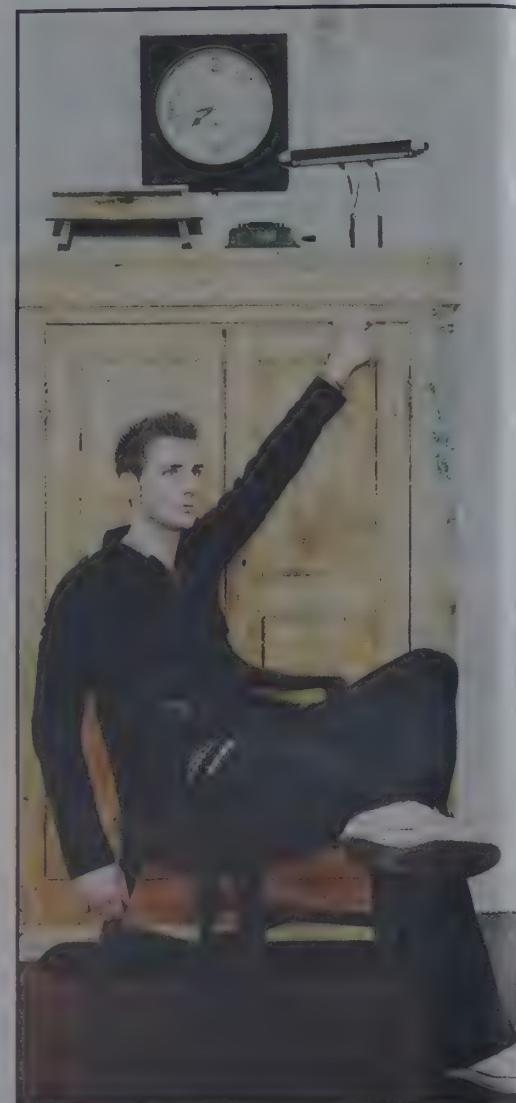
There are a few things that any band has to do for itself. For example, get dressed. Also, they have to make sure they live through breakfast (which can be pretty tough, considering all those sharp utensils). Some even have to write their own music.

For Secondhand Serenade (known to his mom as John Vesely), things are completely different. Vesely does it all himself. From selling his earlier albums from his home in California, to posting his current phone number on his MySpace page for direct contact, Vesely is a veritable entrepreneur in a sea of silver-spooned dandies.

"There are a lot of different ways to do it but [doing it yourself] is definitely a good way," Vesely says. "It's a way to skip the middleman, skip the management and the agents, and get right to the fans. I think a lot of it was inserting myself into a rock world. At the time it was like, Fall Out Boy and My Chemical Romance, but I was doing acoustic rock and it was a little bit different. People relate to honesty. I'm down to earth and I've always connected to them in a straightforward fashion. It makes it more real."

When you create, distribute, and market your own art, it can be difficult to let go. With Secondhand Serenade's album *The Twist In My Story*, Vesely outgrew his modest mom-and-pop self-promotion production company and had to get involved with Warner/Glassnote. Still, he didn't hand everything over to them and soon they were learning from him as well as helping him.

"It's funny to be working with a label," he says, "because coming up how I did, they are going to learn from me as much as I am going to learn from them. They are asking



By Myself | Sure, it's the title of a Celine Dion song, but it's also John Vesely's personal motto. PHOTO SUPPLIED

get the picture. Sometimes barebones, sometimes highly produced, Vesely's sound (like his jump from DIY to being supported by a label) is both hi and lo fi.

what you can let loose the reins of."

The days of peddling his own wares are gone. Vesely can now sit back and focus on his music and his writing without the added pressure

"IT'S A WAY TO SKIP THE MIDDLEMAN, SKIP THE MANAGEMENT AND THE AGENTS, AND GET RIGHT TO THE FANS. I THINK A LOT OF IT WAS INSERTING MYSELF INTO A ROCK WORLD."

me stuff that they don't really know much about."

The stuff they do know much about is his music. A cross between croony acoustic rock and orchestral emo, Secondhand Serenade is all about the love song. Being in love, trouble with love, loving love... you

"You know, labels, 't these guys have been doing it forever but the dynamic has changed," Vesely says. "It's about artist development, which really isn't done anymore. It's always a balance, always a balance. The best you can do is give it what you got and know

of the millions of little things that go into CD production and distribution. But will he miss the pure simplicity of being his own boss?

"Yeah, definitely. I was really successful with it. But, like everything else, you never know how long it will last. Time will tell."

CD REVIEWS



Pop Rock
A.C. NEWMAN
Get Guilty
(Last Gang)
★ ★ ★ ☆

"There Are Maybe Ten Or Twelve," the opening track to the new disc from power-pop wizard Catherpe, is perhaps the closest anyone has come to usman sensitivity to music. It's cheekily aware of There are maybe ten or twelve things I could teach on your own / That wasn't the opening line, it was like of that what you will — but the image of an ad rests on a record shelf has the stabbing emotion flashbacks from *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* too busy honing his lyrics to notice the colour with.

The rest of the lyrics on the disc are much more opaque than "Ten Or Twelve" — as Newman sings on "Submarines of Stockholm," he's twisted his words into "shapes that only make sense when you squint" — but they're saved by Newman's peerless ear for hooky melodies, from the jaunty chorus of "Yo-ho!" on "The Heartbreak Rides" to the majestic swells of "Young Atlantis," rising and falling like the ocean waves. Talk about *Guilty* pleasure!

PAUL MATWYCHUK

Folk Pop

BON IVER
Blood Bank

(lagiaguwar)
★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆



Justin Vernon made quite a name for himself in 2008. He performed his surprising single "Skinny Love" on David Letterman while his other songs were featured in every wannabe hip show on TV. (I'm looking at you, *Grey's Anatomy*.) It's gotta be hard to follow that up, and *Blood Bank* makes it seem like he's not even trying. This EP starts with the same formula that made Bon Iver's debut so enjoyable: soft guitars over a steady, thumping bass drum, with Vernon's TV on the Radio-meets-Elliott Smith vocals over top. "Beach Baby," a forgettable acoustic ballad follows, but it's not until the third song that things start to really change. "Babys" begins with some piano counterpoint building like a Steve Reich piece. Then there's the perplexing closer "Woods," an a cappella song with enough Auto-Tune/vocoder to make T-Pain jealous. *Blood Bank* will undoubtedly give Vernon's fans the fix they need, but as a follow-up to a great debut, it's anemic effort.

Klezmer
GEOFF BERNER
Klezmer Mongrels



If there's anything that identifies the Canadian experience, it's our multicultural heritage and the superiority of B.C. dope. And Klezmer *Mongrels* unapologetically celebrates both. "No Tobacco" proclaims: "We're so proud that B.C. weed / Relaxes you with just one hit ... So please don't put tobacco in it / It makes me cough." Once again, Vancouver's favourite accordion gigolo Geoff Berner lays down track after track of hilarious and playful observations from the dirty, gritty mutt-side of quintessential Canadian life. Calgary's Kris Demeanor chimes in on "One Shoe," a tale about a down-and-out Saskatoon kid, while "Half German Girlfriend" is about a very unlikely pair finding common ground: "The Nazi and the Orthodox Jew / Would be disgusted if they knew / About the dirty things we do / On that they would agree." But what makes Klezmer *Mongrels* infinitely enjoyable are the reeling, folksy jigs that gird Berner's snide but honest lyrics. It's a good day at the pound.

Rock
IN-FLIGHT SAFETY
We Are An Empire My Dear
(Night Danger)
★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆



Listening to this disc, I was struck with the same feeling I had the other night whilst taking a nosedive off a fence. I got the sense that I had been there before – though not with this particular fence, or album. You could compare IFS' sound to, say, the Kaiser Chiefs or any number of other bands that bring back foggy memories of those high-school gin frenzies that saw you waking up face-down on your buddy's basement floor. But that was okay because there was a solid band stuck on repeat guiding you back to consciousness. The kids who work at places like Hollister will eat this stuff up, mostly because it justifies taking 42 minutes out of your day to wallow in angst. Long, rolling melodies on tracks like "Big White Elephant" and "Model Homes" build excitement over the knowledge that you may have a shitty life, but that's okay because there's no point trying to fix it.

All in all, the disc will round out any decent indie Canadian rock collection.

ANDREW PAUL



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AU student Tamara in
Kingston, Ontario, Canada

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MUSIC BUZZ • MUNICIPAL HAPPENINGS | 65 words

Start With The Foundation



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REGGAE PARTY
SOULJAH FYAH
DJ DEGREE
WITH RESIDENT DJ JUNIOR BROWN

WILDLIFE FISH GRIWKOWSKY
LOCAL PROMOTERS UNITE TO
FORM FOUNDATION CONCERTS,
AND WE FIND OUT THAT
BLACKBYRD WASN'T REALLY
DESTROYED, EXACTLY.

his own eventually-failed attempt to drink free for a living – is both nostalgic reach-around and psychologically intriguing. Naming a trail of enemies who nonetheless smile when they yet tell stories about his antics, the man raised "lovable asshole" to a higher plateau than Denis Leary. And holy shit did those shows used to be bonkers. As he writes in Chapter 8: "I did not always perform drunk: I only did so as soon as I could, as much as I could, and for as long as I could get away with."

I'll leave the rest up to a proper review, but if you're interested enough in current music history to read this article regularly, mark your Kittens calendar right now for the book launch and – yes! – Molestics show at New City on Feb. 7.

The damage didn't look too ugly if you knelt down on the sidewalk and peered into Blackbyrd Myoozik around the window paper. A few buckets on the floor, some CD cases

Sunday night I stayed up till 4 a.m. with a coffee mug of festering JD, reading what's now my favourite Canadian autobiography. To be fair, the list so far was Emily Carr's native-fetishizing *Klee Wick* and the Rush drummer's objectivist horror story, at least as far as this narrowly-pinned sub-section of all books goes. And Shatner's who-fucked-Uhura-on-set ramblings don't really

NAMING A TRAIL OF ENEMIES WHO NONTHELESS SMILE WHEN THEY TELL STORIES ABOUT HIS ANTICS, THE MAN RAISED "LOVABLE ASSHOLE" TO A HIGHER PLATEAU THAN DENIS LEARY.

count, do they?

Still, Mike Sore's *Confessions of a Local Celebrity*, an eloquent telling of how The Molestics ridiculously stumbled, inebriatedly, through the swing fad of the mid-'90s, is so refreshingly rude and candid I'm actually commanding you to find a copy and rip it open as soon as you can.

Besides being the most beautifully designed square book in Raymond Biesinger's publishing library (the important local angle), Sore's cheerful evisceration of his fans, promoters, the entertainment media – and

propelled open to breathe. News that the record store was "destroyed" required confirmation, but as the message on the answering machine explained, "We are closed at the moment due to flooding from a broken water pipe." They'd hoped to be open already. Unfortunately, Blackbyrd is closed indefinitely while owner Arthur Fafar negotiates with the insurance company. Businesses have always come and gone, but there's a special nervousness in the air right now I think we can all feel. Retail hasn't been as hard hit in Alberta

City, which is evolving into quite a wicked little venue, P.S.

Tim Burton and Skeletor's joint-birthday-party decor aside, the lobby space has finally recaptured the cozy precision of the old New City location – back before some now-unemployed oil yuppies decided they need to demolish anywhere live music existed (see also Sidetrack Café) for their passionless condos.

But who's laughing now? No one. No one is laughing. Not anywhere, ever.

SEEN IT LIVE • GREAT GIGS YOU MISSED LAST WEEK



Don't Duck | Calgary's Chris Zajko (formerly of The Ostrich) fronts the Sharp Ends upstairs at New City last week. You'd look around now and then as he disappeared to mop up puddles of beer off the floor with his screaming face. Golly, they sure do things differently in other places! Seriously, though, don't miss these guys next time. PHOTO BY FISH GRIWKOWSKY

LIVE MUSIC

THURSDAY**Mus & Roots**

ENNIS HORIZON STAGE, 315 JESPERSON AVE., SPRUCE GROVE With Maureen and Karen Ennis.

PATSY AMICO & BRIAN GREGG TRIO SHERLOCK HOLMES PUB CAPILANO, CAPILANO MALL Doors 8 p.m.

Djs / Club Nights

I LOVE NEW CITY, 10081 JASPER AVE. Dexter Nebula and Anarchy Adam. Every Thur.

Jazz

DUELING PIANO SHOWS THE IVORY CLUB, 2940 CALGARY TR. Dueling piano shows every Thur 8 p.m., Fri & Sat 9 p.m.

Pop & Rock

LYLE HOBBS SHERLOCK HOLMES PUB CAPILANO, CAPILANO MALL

MICHAEL RAULT & THE MIXED SIGNALS NEW CITY, 10081 JASPER AVE. With Whitey Houston.

TERRY MCDADE FAIRMONT HOTEL MACDONALD, 10065 100TH ST. Doors at 9 p.m.

WIDE AWAKE URBAN LOUNGE, 10544 WHYTE AVE. With Honey & The Money and Empire Assassins.

FRIDAY**Alternative**

5 BANDS 5 BUX NEW CITY, 10081 JASPER AVE. With Dimbags, Blacklisted, Comming Cadavers, Rigomonticans and one more guest. Doors at 8 p.m.

PSYCHEDELIC CARNIVAL STARLITE ROOM, 10030 102ND ST. With Regin Shamen and Neon Army DJs. Doors at 9 p.m.

Mus & Roots

KEVIN COSTNER AND THE MODERN WEST SHAW CONFERENCE CENTRE, 9797 JASPER AVE. Doors at 6 p.m.

PATSY AMICO & BRIAN GREGG TRIO SHERLOCK HOLMES PUB CAPILANO, CAPILANO MALL. Doors at 8 p.m.

TIM HUTS & THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN TWO ST. BASIL'S CULTURAL CENTRE, 10019 71ST AVE. With Con Brewster.

Concerts

ENNIS MACLAB CENTRE FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS, #1 ALTAIR PARK Leduc. Doors at 8 p.m.

Saturday

DUELING PIANO SHOWS THE IVORY CLUB, 2940 CALGARY TR. Every Thur 8 p.m., Fri & Sat 9 p.m.

KENT SANGSTER QUARTET YARDBIRD SUITE, #11 TOMMY BANKS WAY Doors at 8 p.m.

THOM BENNETT JEFFREY'S CAFE & WINE BAR, 9640 102ND ST.

RANGER CREEK WRANGGLERS FIDDLERS ROOST, 8906 99TH ST. Doors 7 p.m.

THE SESSIONS URBAN LOUNGE, 10544 WHYTE AVE. THEORY OF A DEAD MAN EDMONTON EVENT CENTRE, 256 - 882 107TH ST. Doors at 8 p.m.

TREASURE FINGERS PAWN SHOP, 2ND FLOOR, 10551 82ND AVE. With Guests. Doors at 9 p.m.

SUNDAY

ALTERNATIVE DEVANEY'S IRISH PUB, 9013 88TH AVE. Hosted by Teri-Lyne Zwicker from 4-7 p.m.

BLUES & ROOTS VACATION ON MARS BLUES ON WHYTE, 10329 WHYTE AVE.

CONCERTS KOKOPOLY FRANCIS WINSPEAR CENTRE, 9720 102ND AVE. Doors at 2 p.m.

PETER ELDRIDGE & KIM NAZARIAN MUTTONHALL ALBERTA COLLEGE, 10050 MACDONALD DR. Doors at 7 p.m.

JAZZ KRISTINA KASTELAN-SIKORA SECOND CUP, 12336 124TH ST. 2-4 p.m.

STRATHCONA STRING QUARTET YARDBIRD SUITE, #11 TOMMY BANKS WAY Doors at 2 p.m.

POPS & ROCK ANBERLIN STARLITE ROOM, 10030 102ND ST. With Madina Labe & Between The Trees. Doors at 7 p.m.

THE BRINK BROX BAR & GRILL, 10030 102ND ST. With Good Things and guests. Doors at 9 p.m.

SECONDHAND SERENADE STARLITE ROOM, 10030 102ND ST. With Meg & Dia and Everlea. Doors at 9:30 p.m.

THE SESSIONS URBAN LOUNGE, 10544 WHYTE AVE. TERRY MCDADE FAIRMONT HOTEL MACDONALD, 10065 100TH ST. Doors at 5 p.m.

SATURDAY**Alternative**

SIX GUNS OVER TOMBSTONE NEW CITY, 10081 JASPER AVE. With Requiem.

Blues & Roots

EDMONTON BLUES SOCIETY QUEEN ALEXANDRA HALL, 10425 UNIVERSITY AVENUE. Doors at 7 p.m.

Concerts

ENSEMBLE MUJIRUSHI STANLEY A. MILNER LIBRARY, #7 SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL SQUARE DOORS 8 p.m.

Djs / Club Nights

OH SNAP! THE TEMPLE, 10030 102ND ST. Degree & All Out DJs.

Jazz

DUELING PIANO SHOWS THE IVORY CLUB, 2940 CALGARY TR. Every Thur 8 p.m., Fri & Sat 9 p.m.

KENT SANGSTER QUARTET YARDBIRD SUITE, #11 TOMMY BANKS WAY Doors at 8 p.m.

Pop & Rock

ABRSU HEROES BRIXX BAR & GRILL, 10030 102ND ST. With Fenix Foundation and September Stone. Doors at 9 p.m.

CAST IN STONE MEAD HALL, 10940 166 A ST. With Suburban Syndrome & Meggido. Doors at 8 p.m.

IN THE MIDST OF MURDER STARLITE ROOM, 10030 102ND ST. With Mark Me For Dead and guests. Doors at 9 p.m.

PROJECT HOPE FUNDRAISER CONCERT PAWN SHOP, 2ND FLOOR, 10551 82ND AVE. With Feast or Famine and Audio Rocketry. Doors at 7 p.m.

RANGER CREEK WRANGGLERS FIDDLERS ROOST, 8906 99TH ST. Doors 7 p.m.

THE SESSIONS URBAN LOUNGE, 10544 WHYTE AVE.

THEORY OF A DEAD MAN EDMONTON EVENT CENTRE, 256 - 882 107TH ST. Doors at 8 p.m.

TREASURE FINGERS PAWN SHOP, 2ND FLOOR, 10551 82ND AVE. With Guests. Doors at 9 p.m.

MONDAY

Concerts

MUSIC WEDNESDAYS AT NOON McDUGALL UNITED CHURCH, 10025 101ST ST. From 12:10-12:50 p.m. Free. Info: 468-9464.

Pop & Rock

DUFF ROBINSON DEVANEY'S IRISH PUB, 9013 88TH AVE. TIM SMITH URBAN LOUNGE, 10544 WHYTE AVE.

Ongoing**Blues & Roots**

JACK DE KEYZER BLUES ON WHYTE, 10329 WHYTE AVE. JAN 23 - 28

MICHAEL CHARLES BLUES ON WHYTE, 10329 WHYTE AVE. JAN 19 - 24

VINDICATORS BLUES ON WHYTE, 10329 WHYTE AVE. JAN 24 - 31

Jazz

TERRY JORDEN MURRIETA'S BAR AND GRILL, 10671 WHYTE AVE., JAN 23-24 Doors at 8 p.m.

Pop & Rock

BLACKBOARD JUNGLE YELLOWHEAD CASINO, 12464 153RD ST. JAN 23 - JAN 24

CATALYST CASINO EDMONTON, 7055 ARGYLL RD., JAN 23 - 24

REDFIRE HARVEY ROSE & CROWN, #195 10235 101ST ST. JAN 20 - 23

DWAYNE ALLAN SHERLOCK HOLMES PUB DOWNTOWN, 10012 101A AVE., JAN 20 - JAN 24

LYLE HOBBS ROSE & CROWN, #195 10235 101ST ST. JAN 27 - 30

STAN GALLANT SHERLOCK HOLMES PUB WEM, WEST EDMONTON MALL, JAN 23 - 27

TONY DIZON SHERLOCK HOLMES PUB WEM, WEST EDMONTON MALL, JAN 20 - 24

TONY DIZON SHERLOCK HOLMES PUB DOWNTOWN, 10012 101A AVE., JAN 20 - JAN 24

OPEN STAGE**Thursday**

LB'S PUB #10, 23 AKINS DR. ST. ALBERT Hosted by Shaved Posse: Ken, Fred, Gordie and Matt. 9 p.m.-12:30 a.m.

FRIDAY

COAST TO COAST PUB AND GRILL 552 CALGARY TR. Doors at 9 p.m.

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION CANADIAN LEGION NORWOOD BRANCH, 1150 82ND ST. Doors at 9 p.m.

Saturday

BLUES ON WHYTE 10329 WHYTE AVE. 4-8:30 p.m. Info: www.bluesonwhyte.ca

CARROT ARTS COFFEE HOUSE 9351 18TH AVE. Music and poetry open mic. 7-10 p.m.

COAST TO COAST 552 CALGARY TR. Hosted by Troy P. Wright. 9 p.m.-2 a.m.

LB'S PUB #10, 23 AKINS DR. ST. ALBERT Hosted by Gord Mardinal. Doors at 4:30 p.m.

MORANGO'S TEK CAFE 1010 79TH ST. Hosted by Dr. Oxide. 7-10 p.m.

Sunday

DUSTER'S PUB 6402 110TH AVE. Hosted by The Mary Thomas Band

EDDIE SHORTS 10713 124TH ST. Hosted by Rob Taylor. 9 p.m.

Hooliganz Pub 10704 124TH ST. Hosted by Rock 'n Roll Kenny

THE LOOP LOUNGE 367 ST. ALBERT RD. ST. ALBERT Hosted by JJ Lemmy B. and The Cats. From 3-10 p.m.

NEWCASTLE PUB & GRILL ACROSS OPEN STAGE 6108 90TH AVE. Hosted by Willy James & Crawdad. Doors 3 p.m.

O'BRYNNS IRISH PUB 10616 WHYTE AVE. Hosted by Joe Bird 9 p.m.

SONGWRITERS STAGE HUBERT'S, 7601 115TH ST. Hosted by Rhea March. Doors 7 p.m. Info: www.Huberts.ca

Monday

THE IVORY CLUB 2940 CALGARY TR. Hosted by Mary Vinko. 8 p.m.

OPEN STAGE WITH IAN IAN WUNDERBAR KOFRAHAUS, 8120 101ST ST. Every Mon at 9:30 p.m. With drums, bass, guitars and whatever else you would like to bring.

PLEASANTVIEW HALL 10860 57TH AVE. Acoustic fiddle jam. Info: Willy 780-474-5270

ROSE BOWL 10111 117TH ST. Hosted by Mike McDonald and Sherry Lee Wisor. 9 p.m.-12 a.m.

Tuesday

AMMARS MOOSEHEAD TUESDAY OPEN STAGE LB'S PUB, #10, 23 AKINS DR. ST. ALBERT Hosted by Mark Ammar and Noel (Big Al) Mackenzie. Moosehead Prizes and Special Doors at 9 p.m.

THE DRUID 10606 JASPER AVE. Hosted by Chris Wynters. 9 p.m.

SIDELINER'S PUB 10108 127TH ST. All Star Jam. Hosted by Alkia Tah and Rickey Sidcar. 8 p.m.

SPORTSMAN'S LOUNGE 8170 50TH ST. Doors 8 p.m.

Wednesday

BLUEGRASS JAM PLEASANTVIEW COMMUNITY HALL, 10860 57TH AVE. Hosted by the Northern Bluegrass Circle Music Society. 7:30 p.m.

EDDIE SHORTS 10713 124TH ST. Open mic; all gear provided.

HAVEN SOCIAL CLUB 15120 A STONY PLAIN RD. Hosted by Ido Vandelaan. 7:30 p.m.

Hooliganz Pub 10704 124TH ST. Hosted by Rock 'n Roll Kenny. 7:30 p.m.

LITTLE FLOWER OPEN STAGE Hosted by Brian Gregg. Doors at 8 p.m. Info: www.littleflowers.ca/780-429-3524.

SECOND CUP 12336 124TH ST. Doors at 8 p.m.

STEEPS TEA LOUNGE 11716 WHYTE AVE. Acoustic open mic.

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on screen

MOVIE REVIEW • OSCAR BAIT! • BY PAUL MATWYCHUK | 152 words

I'm Gonna Tear Your Milhous Down

CAN A FLUFFWEIGHT BRITISH TALK SHOW HOST OUTWIT TRICKY DICK? FROST/NIXON CONTAINS THE ANSWER

FROST/NIXON

Directed by Ron Howard. Starring Frank Langella, Michael Sheen, Kevin Bacon, Sam Rockwell, Oliver Platt. Opens Fri. Jan 23.

★★★★★

Many thought Frank Langella deserved an Oscar nomination last year for his work in *Starting Out in the Evening*, playing an aging New York writer named Leonard Schiller; many think he'll get one this year for *Frost/Nixon*, playing a president that the intellectual, liberal Leonard probably would have loathed. But the two roles are not as dissimilar as they might appear both men have formidable intellects; both have been exiled from the worlds that they once travelled in, and both are hoping, so late in life, to find a point of entry back inside. The big difference is that Schiller's crimes are writ small — crimes of emotional coldness and personal failing — while Nixon's are vast and public. And only in a public forum can he offer his apology.

Not that any kind of apology seems forthcoming as *Frost/Nixon* begins. When the ex-president agrees to a series of TV interviews with British talk show host David Frost (Michael Sheen), there's a good chance that Frost won't even be able to get financial backing for the project and that Nixon might pocket his \$200,000 advance without even stepping before a camera. And even when the interviews do take place, with a desperate Frost carrying the bulk of the cost out of his own pocket, Nixon has every reason to believe that he'll be able to talk rings around his po-

litically inexperienced interviewer — perhaps even redeeming himself in the eyes of the public in the process.

Frost/Nixon is based on the stage play by Peter Morgan, who also wrote *The Queen* (about Elizabeth II) and *The Last King of Scotland* (about Idi Amin), and who has a knack for finding and dramatizing underexplored little corners of recent history — usually involving young, callow men encountering towering world leaders and struggling merely to keep their heads above water. I have a hard time, having recently watched the original *Frost/Nixon* Watergate interview on DVD, that Frost was as easily distracted a dilettante as Morgan makes him out to be — he seemed very sharp to me — but the David-and-Goliath conflict in *Frost/Nixon* is so entertaining, I can hardly object. The sick look that creeps across Frost's face during his first interview session, as Nixon deflects all his "hardball" questions with interminable, clock-killing anecdotes, is perhaps the film's comic high point. Sheen even duplicates Frost's tic of absentmindedly tugging on his finger — as if wishing the gesture would cause a parachute to open and whisk him away somewhere nicer.

Langella is getting much more attention than Sheen for *Frost/Nixon* (much as Helen Mirren did for *The Queen*), but Sheen's Frost is the character I was much more invested in. Maybe that's because I've done many celebrity interviews in my life as well, and often feel myself to be as much of an intellectual lightweight as he does. My thinking on political issues is not terribly deep, and I have to admit to identifying with Frost's inability, during the early preparation sessions for the interviews, to hold all those complicated histori-



I Am Not A Crook, But I Am A Good Subject For An Interview | Frank Langella prepares to be grilled by Michael Sheen in *Frost/Nixon*. PHOTO COURTESY OF UNIVERSAL PICTURES

cal facts in his head. And so, Frost's emergence in the climactic sequence as the man who finally gets Nixon to own up to his wrongdoing in the Oval Office (or at least to admit that he "let the American people down") is an appealing professional fantasy. (As in the scene where he meets slim, sexy Rebecca Hall during a flight to California, chats her up, seduces her, and convinces her to join him in his visit to Nixon's beachhouse before the plane even reaches the runway.)

Langella plays his final few scenes

beautifully: the long silence he takes before he offers his on-camera mea culpa; the strange post-interview moment where he pets a stranger's dachshund; a final encounter with Frost where he tells his adversary how lucky he is to be able to enjoy parties and being around people. But I'm not completely sold on this performance — Langella seems constrained by the deep voice he's adopted for the role, even though it doesn't sound particularly like Nixon's. Or maybe I'm just too much of a fan here.

Philip Baker Hall's towering Nixon in Robert Altman's *Secret Honor* to give any other interpretations of Nixon a fair shake.

What would the real Nixon think of these shadow versions of himself haunting the big screen, I wonder? If you were to ask his ghost would he admit to ever seeing *Secret Honor*? Would he have laughed at Dick? Langella or Anthony Hopkins which actor does he think did him justice? Now that's an interview I'd love to get.

DVD DICTATOR • THE MOVIES YOU MUST BUY THIS TUESDAY

SEXUAL MISBEHAVIOUR!

Vicky Cristina Barcelona

CAST | Scarlett Johansson, Rebecca Hall, Javier Bardem, Penélope Cruz

Woody Allen's 39th directorial effort arrives on DVD buoyed by a surprise win at the Golden Globes as the year's "Best Comedy or Musical," but it still feels like a minor-key effort from the veteran comedian. Much of the advance publicity focused on Scarlett Johansson, playing a callow American sojourning in Spain, but it's her female co-stars who shine: Rebecca Hall is the best female interpreter of Allen's dialogue since Mia Farrow, while Penélope Cruz smoulders memorably as Javier Bardem's batshit-insane ex-girlfriend.

LEGAL SHENANIGANS!

Roman Polanski: Wanted And Desired

DIRECTOR | Marina Zenovich

If SEE's interview with Marina Zenovich two issues ago piqued your curiosity about this doc but you failed to make it to Metro Cinema, it's time to catch up with it on DVD. The film revisits Polanski's sensational 1978 trial for raping a 13-year-old girl, but it focuses more on the ethically questionable behaviour of the presiding judge, and suggests that Polanski's decision to flee the country was entirely justified. The film's revelations have reopened Polanski's case, and may even clear the way for him to return to the U.S.

POLITICAL HANKY-PANKY!

Frost/Nixon: The Watergate Interview

FEATURING | David Frost, Richard Nixon

Frost/Nixon has finally reached Edmonton screens (see review above), and a good way to prepare for watching Ron Howard's recreation of David Frost's 1977 interview with Richard Nixon is to view the genuine article, newly issued on DVD, complete with an intro from Frost himself, who offers several revealing anecdotes about the former president (including Nixon asking him, just before cameras began rolling, if he'd "done any fornicating" the night before). Arguably more compelling and dramatic than the movie.



The Penélopeiad | Penélope Cruz gives her best performance since *Volver*, and her best English-language performance ever in Woody Allen's nosy-toshy romp *Vicky Cristina Barcelona*. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE WEINSTEIN COMPANY

MOVIE REVIEW • FOREIGN • BY MICHAEL HINGSTON | 549 words

Alice In Chains



Truth And Nails | Alice's House paints a neorealist picture of a São Paulo nail salon worker and her colourfully troubled family. PHOTO COURTESY OF KINOSMITH

AN UNAPPRECIATED BRAZILIAN WOMAN'S HOME LIFE IS DEPICTED WITH WELCOME SUBTLETY IN ALICE'S HOUSE

Alice's House

Written and directed by Chico Teixeira. Starring Carla Ribas, Berta Zemel, Vinicius Zinn. Metro Cinema (Zeidler Hall), The Glassel. Fri-Mon, Jan 23-26.

★★★★☆

I hope writer/director Chico Teixeira continues to have success with *Alice's House*, his bustling 2007 family drama set in a secret-ridden home in São Paulo, but one thing I absolutely do not wish upon it is a Hollywood remake. Where Teixeira teases out his story from the knotted relationships between Alice, her husband, three sons, and mother with preci-

tion any of it.

This is because rather than prod the audience with reminders of these things every few minutes, he drops tiny, sporadic hints – no more than three or four total for each son – and slips them in whenever they gel into the larger framework of their parents' covert affairs: Alice (Carla Ribas) with her childhood sweetheart, their father with a barely legal local girl.

And take note, Hollywood: when you let ambiguities simmer in the background, your audience will be fully glued to the screen trying to resolve them. We never come close to understanding Edinho or his thiev-

the direction that keeps the audience from gaining an emotional foothold. We don't see into a single character's mind, let alone their hearts; when Alice confesses to her co-worker at the nail salon that she's falling hard for her old flame, it's news to about everyone but Alice.

Occasionally, however, this does work to the film's advantage, as when Alice pummels her husband's lover at the door of their apartment – the camera films the entire scene from behind, so distant that it never even shows the girl's wounded face. In fact, we never see her again, back of head or otherwise.

Like Alfonso Cuarón's *Y Tu Mamá También*, the most pointed critique in *Alice's House* is aimed at those who neglect the domestic working class. Here, that victim is Alice's mother,

ALICE IS A QUIET, STURDY WOMAN WITH FAILING EYESIGHT, WHO DOES EVERY IOTA OF CLEANING IN THE HOUSE BUT WHOSE WORK IS NEVER ACKNOWLEDGED.

sion and subtlety, Hollywood would never allow such blatant ambiguities to stand. And with very minor adjustments, *Alice's House* would be obnoxiously eccentric – thank goodness Teixeira works in Brazil.

Look, for example, at Alice's sons. There's Junior (Felipe Massuia), a lanky teen trying to sleep with his girlfriend for the first time; Edinho (Ricardo Vilaça), a low-budget thief who even steals from his own grandmother; and Lucas (Vinicius Zinn), who at 21 is the eldest and who just

ery, and that gap feels infinitely more plausible. The way the family interacts with one another is similarly unspoken, and this too is wholly convincing, whether it's Alice's frazzled sighs, the brothers' sharp glances and broken eye contact, or the way the grandmother (Berta Zemel) wearily accepts a new pile of clothes to wash.

Teixeira's realism is appreciated for its own sake, but it also cleverly covers up a story that sometimes sags and a clinical detachment in

and the culprit everyone else. She's a quiet, sturdy woman with failing eyesight, who does every iota of cleaning in the house but whose work is never thanked or acknowledged. Alice's husband simply grumbles that his socks aren't hand-washed, while Edinho makes her a lamp for her bedroom, only to rifle through her purse after setting it up.

Of course, she never vocalizes her pains, but the way she quietly putters around the house will break your heart all the same.



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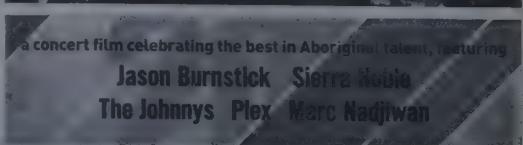
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Our Bodies, Our Shelves

IN INKHEART, BRENDAN FRASER CAN BRING ANY FICTIONAL CHARACTER TO LIFE — EXCEPT THE ONE HE'S PLAYING

INKHEART

Directed by Iain Softley. Starring Brendan Fraser, Eliza Bennett, Helen Mirren, Paul Bettany. Opens Fri. Jan 23.

★★★½

Inkheart, not surprisingly, started out as a novel by author Cornelia Funke. But in a Hollywood that's converting to the screen every children's book with a magic trick and fuzzy talking sidekick, even this ode to the enchanting power of the written word is getting the two-hour treatment.

The adaptation focuses on Brendan Fraser as Mortimer Folchart, more for name recognition purposes than the demands of the story — Mortimer's daughter Meggie (Eliza Bennett) is the true star of the novel. Still, it's Mortimer's "silver tongue," his magical ability to literally extract fictional characters out of books simply by reading them aloud, that kicks the plot into action; he's also twitchy-afraid of his one and only parlour trick. (Cowardliness is not a trait that suits Fraser's action-packed persona well — *Inkheart* contains far

too many sequences of Mortimer struggling helplessly against evil henchman in the absence of reading material.) Meggie, on the other hand, is the one with the daring and gumption to face the aftermath of the last time her dad read to her out loud.

It was almost a decade ago, in fact, that Mortimer opened his mouth to read Meggie's first, and only, bedtime story — a scary and hefty tome for a four-year-old, also called *Inkheart*. He accidentally pulls from its pages Dustfinger (Paul Bettany), a tricky fire-eater with a ferret friend, and the (allegedly) wicked Capricorn (Andy Serkis). Upon discovering his gift, Mortimer realizes that it's more of a foreign exchange program — if someone comes out of the book, someone else has to go in. And when Capricorn and Dustfinger came out, his wife went in. Now, Mortimer searches endlessly to find another copy of the book so he can read his wife out again.

I could explain what happens next, but from the moment the film begins, it starts to unwind since it completely ignores magical matters such as how the presence or absence of certain characters affects the narrative of the novels they disappear



If Only He'd Put On A Pixar DVD Instead ... | Brendan Fraser reads daughter Mirabel O'Keefe a bedtime story in *Inkheart* ... and it does not go well. PHOTO COURTESY OF NEW LINE CINEMA

from, favouring a shaky camera and some CGI instead. (Woody Allen's *The Purple Rose of Cairo* did a much better — and funnier — job of finesseing this issue.) I'm willing to grant a fantasy film a few liberties, but when you use magic willy-nilly, making a

supernatural rule only to break it the next scene, I lose patience. And in *Inkheart*, director Iain Softley uses magic like duct tape, slapping it over every leak in the plot.

Somewhere in there, we have a homesick Dustfinger offering Mortimer up to Capricorn for a shot at going home to the pages of his book. Meanwhile, Capricorn, in his short time on Earth, has practically become a Bond villain, plotting to rule the world, huffing and puffing out his chest but never blowing anything away. When Mortimer finally gets a chance, he reads the lamest passages from whatever book he happens to be holding, using the storm from *The Wizard of Oz* to escape Capricorn's lair instead of the ruby

slippers. (There's no place like home, Mortimer! Remember?)

By the end, all we have is special effects throwing up everywhere with buildings burning for no reason and Helen Mirren, who plays Meggie's grandma, riding on a unicorn to save the day, looking as wacky and ineffectual as an art history teacher.

At least Paul Bettany does a good job of generating sympathy for his morally dubious character: the scenes where a despairing Dustfinger ties his best to make his way home are the film's only charming moments. Other than that, *Inkheart* is a movie whose villains aren't villainous, whose heroes aren't heroic and whose magic is the opposite of magical.

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BEERS FOR QUEENS

THU.JAN.29-DJ.TOOFLASH



MOVIE REVIEW • ANIMATION • BY PAUL MATWYCHUK | 685 words

Can A Cartoon Be A Documentary?



He's a Lumberjack, But He's Not Okay | The hero of Dennis Tupicoff's "Chainsaw" doesn't realize his wife is cheating on him while he's all work in the forest. IMAGE SUPPLIED

THE SHORTS IN THIS YEAR'S OTTAWA ANIMATION FESTIVAL ANTHOLOGY ARE MORE REALISTIC THAN MANY LIVE-ACTION FILMS

BEST OF THE OTTAWA ANIMATION FESTIVAL 2008

Venous directors. Metro Cinema (Zeidler Hall, The Citadel). Jan 23-26.

★★★★★

As live-action films become more and more like cartoons — full of superhero heroics, True Romance-style teen melodrama, or slapstick situations that even Wile E. Coyote would find extreme — animated films are taking their inspiration more and more from real life.

At least, that's the conclusion I reached after watching *Best of the Ottawa Animation Festival 2008*, a 70-minute compendium of notable

ry" about cattle auctioneers in which the images (some of it live auction footage shot by the filmmakers) zoom across the screen at the same relentless, superhuman speed as the syllables fly from the auctioneers' mouths. It's like Norman McLaren's "Neighbours" on crystal meth ... and wearing a cowboy hat.

Or "The Mixy Tapes," a difficult-to-summarize exercise in high-speed deconstruction in which filmmaker David Seitz and musician Mike Wray can be heard on the soundtrack arguing heatedly over what approach they want the film to take — i.e., the very film we're watching. David Seitz is keen on incorporating a grotesque, id-like infant named "Tumbles" into the mix, but Wray hates the idea; the result is that Tumbles is simultaneously part of the film and edited out of it, like Schrödinger's cat.

A VILLAIN GROWS INTO A GIANT, WRECKS A CITY, AND THEN SHRINKS HIMSELF AND NEARLY ESCAPES ON A BUTTERFLY BEFORE THE HERO AND HEROINE CAPTURE HIM.

short films from the largest animation showcase in North America. Rather than tell an invented fictional story, nearly all of these nine shorts incorporate documentary elements of some kind — found footage, audio interviews, personal anecdotes or stories from friends — which the filmmaker then improvises upon, if you can call the painstaking process of creating an animated film "improvisational." The esthetic here has more in common with *Waltz With Bashir* than *Wall-E*, and the best entries point the way toward a fruitful new direction for the animation genre.

Take Canadian directors Mike Maryniuk and Matt Rankin's "Cattle Call," for instance; it's an explosive three-minute "pixilated documentary"

(Hey, I told you this one was hard to summarize.)

In "A Letter to Colleen," co-director Andy London reads a letter he's written to a girl he knew when he was a teenager; in it, he describes the disturbing events of his drug- and alcohol-fuelled 18th birthday party. Meanwhile, we see those events re-created via grainy white-on-black rotoscope animation that makes the images seem both unreal and hyper-real — especially the recurring image of Colleen's face, which retains the same blissed-out smile whether she's shaving her head or vomiting onto the floor.

"It's Always the Same Story" is a slight but charming teenaged anecdote, directed by Joris Clerc and Anne Morin, in which a Frenchman

recalls sneaking off to see the steamy X-rated film *Emmanuelle* with a friend ... only to have his father take him to see the exact same film the very next day to teach him about "the facts of life." Less successful is Karen Nasdor-Jones' "I Slept With Cookie Monster," a woman's account of her marriage to (and eventual escape from) a violent husband; the animation is uninspired and at only three minutes, it's like a précis for a much longer, more dramatic film.

My favourites in the collection are the final two. Run Wrake's breathless "The Control Master" uses '50s and '60s-era clip art, magazine ads, and snippets from comic books to tell a surreal, wordless story of a villain who grows into a giant, wrecks a city, then shrinks himself and nearly escapes on a butterfly before the hero and heroine finally capture him.

As for Dennis Tupicoff's brilliant "Chainsaw," it begins as an instructional film about chainsaw safety, morphs into an obituary for a renowned prize bull, then again into a biography of the renowned bullfighter Dominguin. But at its heart, it's the story of a tragic love triangle between three people who on one level are an Australian lumberjack, his wife, and her lover, but who on another level are also Frank Sinatra, Ava Gardner, and Dominguin. The connections holding the film together make very little sense on a literal level, but on the level of dream logic, "Chainsaw" feels perfectly straightforward — right up until the shocking ending, a horrifying yet poetic image no live action film could pull off anywhere near as deftly.

The Wrestler

Nightly

7:00pm & 9:10pm

Sat • Sun

MATINEES ■ 2:30 pm

RATED 14A

• COARSE LANGUAGE •

• SEXUAL CONTENT •

• NUDITY •



Defiance

Nightly

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Sat • Sun

MATINEES @ 2:00 pm

RATED 14A

• COARSE LANGUAGE •

• VIOLENCE •



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MOVIE REVIEW • 3-D! BY WARREN HAAS | 468 words

3-D Gore And Nudity: Surprisingly Dull!



Charisma That Pops Off The Screen | My Bloody Valentine 3-D star Jensen Ackles gives a performance so real you can practically reach out and touch him! PHOTO COURTESY OF LIONSGATE

THE NOVELTY SOON WEARS OFF IN *MY BLOODY VALENTINE 3-D*. BUT YOU DO GET AN EYEBALL HURLED AT YOU

MY BLOODY VALENTINE 3-D

Directed by Patrick Lussier. Starring Jensen Ackles, Jaime King, Kerr Smith, Edi Gathegi. Now playing.

★★★☆☆

The problem with reviewing *My Bloody Valentine 3-D* is that as much as it is a fairly predictable slasher film, it's a fairly predictable slasher film in 3-D — and the thing about 3-D technology is that it almost always makes movies far more entertaining than they have any right to be. Such

turned to the mining town of Harmony after being gone for 10 years. He discovers that his ex-girlfriend Sarah (Jaime King) is now married to his former high school nemesis Axel Palmer (Kerr Smith), who is also conveniently the town sheriff. And, of course, his return comes on the anniversary of the Valentine's Day killing spree by homicidal miner Harry Warden (Rich Walters) that initially caused him to leave. It is then only a matter of time (about five minutes) before someone dressed up in Warden's old mining gear starts killing off the citizens of Harmony.

To be clear, the movie has no greater ambition than to be an R-rated

tradition of campy slasher originals like *Friday the 13th*, where the removal of clothes signifies imminent death. And boy, are those deaths gory! Very few of the characters die off-camera, and the rest expire amid a large splattering of blood and muscle tissue. Showing all in 3-D makes it that much more disgusting.

Unfortunately, Lussier uses up most of his camera tricks pretty quickly, after which he's content merely to reuse angles that he presumably thinks look the most stunning in three dimensions. (It feels like half the movie was shot from behind chainlink fences.) The 3-D

AMONG THE ITEMS THAT *MY BLOODY VALENTINE 3-D* DIRECTOR PATRICK LUSSIER CONVENIENTLY THROWS IN THE DIRECTION OF THE CAMERA: AN EYEBALL, SEVERAL GUNS, A LOWER JAWBONE, BREASTS, EXPLOSIONS, AND A VAGINA.

is the case here, as director Patrick Lussier's remake of the 1981 Canadian horror cult classic throws objects at the camera with such frequency that you end up remembering more about all the pickaxes flying toward you than you do about the plot. But is that really such a bad thing?

The story — as much of it as I can recall — revolves around Tom Haninger (Jensen Ackles), who has re-

3-D film; Lussier wants to do nothing more than find excuses to make explicit images pop out of the screen at the audience. Among the items that are conveniently thrown in the direction of the camera: an eyeball, several guns, a lower jawbone, breasts, explosions, and a vagina.

But don't mistake the full frontal nudity in *My Bloody Valentine* for simple lewdness; it belongs to the

novelty soon starts to wear off, to the point where you start to wonder if the movie would be interesting at all in 2-D. The reality is that a three-second close-up of a bloody pickaxe isn't remotely scary when it doesn't appear to be coming out of the screen. At worst it's tiresome, and at best it eats up screen time that would otherwise be devoted to the overacting of Kerr Smith.

MOVIE GUIDE WHAT'S PLAYING IN THE THEATRES



"Why Didn't You Just Burn The Tapes?" | Whoops! Wrong Michael Sheen movie! The Frost/Nixon star also appears in Underworld: Rise of the Lycans this week. PHOTO COURTESY OF SCREEN GEMS

OPENING THIS WEEK

ALICE'S HOUSE

Carla Ribas, Berta Zemel, and Vinicius Zinn star in director Chico Teixeira's kitchen-sink drama, revolving around a forty-something woman in São Paulo whose husband and sons are all living secret lives. In Portuguese with English subtitles. *Metro Cinema*: Jan 23-26 (Fri, Sun @ 7pm; Sat, Mon @ 9pm)

BEST OF THE OTTAWA ANIMATION FESTIVAL 2008

A selection of short films from the prestigious Canadian animation showcase, including titles like "I Slept With Cookie Monster," "Chainsaw," and "The Comic That Frenches Your Mind." *Metro Cinema*: Jan 23-26 (Sat, Mon @ 7pm; Fri, Sun @ 9pm)

FROST/NIXON

Frank Langella, Michael Sheen, Kevin Bacon, Sam Rockwell, and Oliver Platt star in *A Beautiful Mind* director Ron Howard's film version of Peter Morgan's stage play about the 1977 series of interviews pitting disgraced former U.S. president Richard Nixon against the lightweight British TV star David Frost.

INKHEART

Brendan Fraser, Jim Broadbent, Paul Bettany, Andy Serkis, and Helen Mirren star in *The Skeleton Key* director Iain Softley's adaptation of Cornelia Funke's children's fantasy novel about a man with the ability to summon fictional characters out of storybooks, and who now must venture inside one of those books to rescue his long-lost wife.

UNDERWORLD: RISE OF THE LYCANS

Rhona Mitra, Bill Nighy, Michael Sheen, and Kate Beckinsale star in director Patrick Tatopoulos' prequel to the *Underworld* saga, in which a young werewolf rallies his fellow "Lycans" into revolting against the cruel vampire king who has enslaved them.

ALSO PLAYING

BEDTIME STORIES

This attempt by Adam Sandler to cross over into the kiddie-pic market is a mess so noisy

and overproduced that even Russell Brand from *Forgetting Sarah Marshall* gets lost in the clutter.

★ ★ ☆ ☆

BRIDE WARS

Tooth-grindingly charmless bridezilla comedy that only the most understanding chick-flick fan could find tolerable.

★ ☆ ☆ ☆

THE CURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN BUTTON

David Fincher's fable about a man who begins life as an old man and steadily ages backwards into infancy is a curiously un-moving experience, with a disappointingly opaque central performance by Brad Pitt.

★ ★ ☆ ☆

DEFIANCE

An amazing true story — the tale of four Jewish brothers in Second World War Poland who led a forest encampment from which more than 1,000 Jews resisted the Nazis — gets a Hollywood-style retelling. Well-made in its way, but you never forget you're just watching a movie.

★ ☆ ☆ ☆

GRAN TORINO

Clint Eastwood's performance as grouchy-growly Walt Kowalski, a retired auto worker and still-active racist, is his most iconic character since Dirty Harry. The film ain't subtle, but it's damned entertaining.

★ ★ ★ ☆

HOTEL FOR DOGS

The cinematic equivalent of a "Puppies 2009" calendar. Low on cinematic innovation, but the "Awwwww... cute!" factor is high.

★ ★ ☆ ☆

LAST CHANCE HARVEY

Before Sunrise for the Centrum crowd. Dustin Hoffman and Emma Thompson generate mild chemistry as they walk around London. Too many montages, not enough charm.

★ ☆ ☆ ☆

MARLEY & ME

Cute dogs make people smile. Dying dogs

make people cry. You don't have to be a master director to elicit those reactions from an audience, and this lazy adaptation of John Grogan's bestselling memoir doesn't try to do much else. And it's 120 minutes long!

★ ★ ☆ ☆

NOTORIOUS

Generic but serviceable biopic of The Notorious B.I.G. (played by plus-size rapper Jamal Woolard, aka Gravy). The musical perfor-

mances have a lot more energy than the cliché-ridden script.

★ ★ ★ ☆

PAUL BLART: MALL COP

Not funny enough to recommend, but too offensive and genial to hate. If you're looking for an okay time-waster for a slushy January afternoon, this Adam Sandler-produced riff on *Die Hard* featuring a blubbery Segway-riding security guard instead of a badass off-duty policeman gets the job done.

★ ★ ☆ ☆

THE READER

What's with all the sympathetic Nazis in the theatres right now? Tom Cruise in *Valkyrie*, the little kid in *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, and now Kate Winslet as the mysterious older woman who seduces the adolescent version of Ralph Fiennes into manhood. Hey, someone had to do it.

★ ★ ☆ ☆

REVOLUTIONARY ROAD

Sam Mendes' film version of Richard Yates' novel about a "perfect" Connecticut couple in the 1950s struggling against their conformist lifestyle has a cold, overly studied visual style, but the devastating power of Yates' grim story still emerges — especially whenever the camera is on Kate Winslet's face.

★ ★ ★ ☆

SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE

Every Oscar season, there's always a "little

movie that could" that emerges as the crowd-pleasing contender to win Best Picture. This gimmicky but winning urban fairytale about a Mumbai slum kid who wins a fortune on a TV game show is 2008's answer to *Juno* and *Little Miss Sunshine* — and it's better than either of them.

★ ★ ★ ★ ☆

THE UNBORN

It's not just the Oscar prestige movies that are obsessed with Nazis this year — even cheesy creepy-kid horror movies like this one from *The Dark Knight* co-writer David S. Goyer turn out to have a Holocaust connection.

★ ★ ☆ ☆

VALKYRIE

Yeah, yeah, we know the eyepatch is distracting. But Bryan Singer's thriller about a group of Nazi army officers plotting to kill Hitler is better than the negative buzz suggested, and we're actually kind of relieved Tom Cruise doesn't attempt a German accent.

★ ★ ★ ☆

THE WRESTLER

Mickey Rourke is an aging former wrestling star, now reduced to minimum-wage drudgery at a supermarket, but still clinging to the last shreds of his former glory. Rourke is just magnificent: brutal, vulnerable, monstrous, heartbreakingly... no one adjective does him justice.

★ ★ ★ ★ ☆



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How To Be Good | With a script by Nick Hornby and a star-making lead performance by Carey Mulligan, *An Education* is a Sundance film to watch for. PHOTO COURTESY OF SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL

THIS WEEK: THE BEST OF THE 2009 SUNDANCE FESTIVAL... SO FAR

Jeffrey Wells, *Hollywood Elsewhere* | "Lone Scherfig's *An Education*, a coming-of-age period drama set in 1960s London, is the absolute shit — the best film of the Sundance Film Festival, a finely tuned and deeply engaging film by regular popcorn-watching standards, an award-calibre drama that will definitely be in contention at the end of the year, and a movie that has launched a genuine movie star in an old-fashioned and yet very new-fashioned sense — 23-year-old Carey Mulligan. Within two or three minutes I knew I was

watching someone extraordinary. Mulligan's Jenny is a very bright and vivacious 16-year-old living a somewhat stifled, middle-class life and pinning her hopes on being admitted to Oxford University. What's extra-special about Mulligan is that she possesses — in this film, at least — a perky A-student Audrey Hepburn quality that makes you fall for her at the drop of a hat."

Karina Longworth, *Spout* | "Ry Russo-Young's *You Won't Miss Me* is identifiable as a film about a young woman made by young women, which is unusual enough at Sundance that the film's very existence is almost a revelation. By immersing us in the world of

23-year-old aspiring actress/recent mental patient Shelly Brown, and buying the point of view so deep within the character that Shelly's social imbalance sometimes feels contagious, writer/director Russo-Young and co-writer/star Stella Schnabel remind us how rare it is to see a film about the inner life of a beautiful, troubled young lady without the objectifying filter of the male gaze, without the beauty and the trouble fusing into a fantasy cipher of a postmodern damsel in distress."

Nathan Rabin, *The Onion AV Club* | "The Carter is L'il Wayne's *Don't Look Back*, a rambling, casual look at what it's like to be in the eye of

a pop-culture hurricane. Like Dylan in *Don't Look Back*, Wayne is a superstar, a pop icon and a wealthy, wealthy man but he's also at heart just an arrogant, self-absorbed twentysomething all too convinced of his own genius. In *The Carter*, L'il Wayne exists in a bubble of rapturous narcissism, acting out his lyrics like me and Peter Ruen did with 'Good Morning Sunshine' back in the sixth grade and smoking joints when not drowning in a river of potent cough syrup that will probably kill him sooner rather than later. *The Carter* could use a little more context, but as an impressionist portrait of a self-destructive workaholic/drug addict, it's consistently fascinating."



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THE WRESTLER

14A
Nigely 6:30, 9:10, Sat/Sun matinees 2:30. *Social content, nudity, coarse language.*

DEFENCE

14A
Nigely 6:30, 9:10, Sat/Sun matinees 2:30. *Nudity, coarse language.*

PARKLAND

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OKHEART

Nigely 6:45, 9:00, matinee Sat/Sun & Tues 6:45, 9:10. *Frightening scenes.*

VALKYIE

Nigely 7:00, 9:30. *Violence, coarse language.*

MARLEY & ME

Matinee Sat/Sun & Tues 8:15. 9:30.

BRIDE WARS

Nigely 7:05, 9:05, matinee Sat/Sun 12:55, 3:00.

GRAN TORINO

Nigely 6:55, 9:25, matinee Sat/Sun & Tues 6:10, 9:30. *Movies for Minors. See 10:00 language may offend.*

BEDTIME STORIES

Montrose Sun, Sat, Sun 1:15, 3:15.

YES MAN

Nigely 9:10, 11:15.

HOTEL FOR DOGS

Nigely 6:15, 9:15, matinee Sat/Sun 6:10, 12:30, 5:30.

PAUL BLART: MALL COP

Nigely 7:00, 9:30, matinee Sat/Sun 8:10, 10:30.

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OKHEART

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BRIDE WARS

Daily 12:45, 7:00.

MARLEY AND ME

Daily 7:40, 9:45, 10:00.

HOTEL FOR DOGS

Daily 1:00, 4:00, 4:55, 6:55, 8:55.

UNDERWORLD 3: THE RISE OF THE LYCANS

Daily 1:20, 2:20, 5:20, 7:20, 9:20. *No passes.*

PAUL BLART: MALL COP

Daily 12:35, 2:35, 4:05, 5:00, 7:00, 9:25.

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INKHEART

Nigely 6:55, 9:20, matinee Sat/Sun 12:55, 3:30.

GRAN TORINO

Nigely 7:00, 9:30, matinee Sat/Sun 1:00, 3:00. *Language may offend.*

HOTEL FOR DOGS

Nigely 7:05, 9:15, matinee Sat/Sun 1:05, 3:15.

UNDERWORLD 3: THE RISE OF THE LYCANS

Nigely 7:10, 9:25, matinee Sat/Sun 1:10, 3:25.

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PAUL BLART: MALL COP

PG
Fri/Mon 7:10, 9:30; Sat/Sun 1:00, 3:30, 7:10, 9:30.

INKHEART

Fri, Mon/Tues 7:00, 9:30; Sat/Sun 1:00, 2:00, 4:00, 7:00, 9:30. *Frightening scenes.*

MILK

Fri, Mon/Tues 6:30, 9:45; Sat/Sun 12:40, 3:45, 6:30, 9:45. *Conga language.*

THE READER

Fri/Tues 6:30, 9:45; Sat/Sun 12:55, 3:30, 6:45, 9:45. *Social content.*

HOTEL FOR DOGS

Fri/Tues 6:30, 9:45; Sat/Sun 12:55, 3:30, 6:45, 9:45. *Violence.*

MY BLOODY VALENTINE

18A
Fri/Tues 1:00, 3:30, 6:30, 9:30. *Gory scenes, nudity, sexual content.*

CHANDNI CHOWK TO CHINA

Fri/Tues 7:00, 9:00. *Violence.*

BRIDE WARS

Fri/Tues 7:00, 9:00. *Violence.*

THE UNBORN

Fri/Tues 7:00, 9:15, 10:15. *Violence, frightening scenes.*

BEDTIME STORIES

Fri/Tues 7:00, 9:30, 10:30. *Frightening scenes.*

MARLEY & ME

Fri/Tues 7:00, 9:30, 10:30, 11:30. *Nudity, coarse language.*

GRAN TORINO

Fri/Tues 7:00, 9:30, 10:30, 11:30. *Violence, language may offend.*

NOTORIOUS

Fri/Tues 7:00, 9:30, 10:30, 11:30. *Violence.*

REVOLUTIONARY ROAD

14A
Fri/Tues 7:00, 9:30, 11:30, 12:30, 1:30, 2:30, 3:30, 4:30, 5:30, 6:30, 7:30, 8:30. *Coarse language, mature themes.*

BEDTIME STORIES

Fri/Tues 7:00, 9:30, 10:30, 11:30. *Frightening scenes.*

INKHEART

Fri/Tues 7:00, 9:30, 10:30, 11:30. *Frightening scenes.*

PAUL BLART: MALL COP

PG
Fri/Mon 7:10, 9:30; Sat/Sun 1:00, 3:30, 7:10, 9:30.

THE CUREVIEW 10 CINEMAS

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THE UNBORN

Fri, Mon/Tues 6:30, 6:45, 7:15, 8:15, 9:15. *Violence, frightening scenes.*

GRAN TORINO

Fri, Mon/Tues 6:45, 7:05, 9:25. *Sexual content, coarse language.*

SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE

14A
Fri 12:50, 2:30, 4:30, 6:30, 8:00, 9:30, 10:30. *Violence.*

METROPOLITAN OPERA: ORFFEO ED EURIDICE — GLUCK STC

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WWF: ROYAL RUMBLE

STC
Sun 6:00

LARGER THAN LIFE

STC
Wed 7:00

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UNDERWORLD: RISE OF THE LYCANS

Fri/Tues 7:10, 2:45, 5:15, 8:00, 10:40. *Gory scenes, No passes.*

PAUL BLART: MALL COP

Fri/Tues 7:28, 2:40, 5:10, 7:40, 9:45, 11:45. *Nudity, coarse content.*

NOTE FOR DOGS

G
Fridays 12:00, 2:00, 4:00, 6:00, 8:00, 10:00. *Violence, frightening scenes.*

MY BLOODY VALENTINE

18A
Fridays 1:00, 3:00, 5:00, 7:00, 9:00. *Gory scenes, No passes.*

DEFANCE

PG
Fridays 1:00, 3:00, 5:00, 7:00, 9:00. *Violence, coarse language.*

BRIDE WARS

PG
Fridays 1:00, 3:00, 5:00, 7:00, 9:00. *Violence.*

THE UNBORN

14A
Fridays 1:00, 3:00, 5:00, 7:00, 9:00. *Violence, frightening scenes.*

BEDTIME STORIES

Fridays 1:00, 3:00, 5:00, 7:00, 9:00. *Frightening scenes.*

THE CURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN BUTTON

PG
Fridays 1:00, 3:00, 5:00, 7:00, 9:00. *Violence, coarse language, mature themes.*

FROST/NIXON

PG
Fridays 1:00, 3:00, 5:00, 7:00, 9:00. *Violence, coarse language.*

GRAN TORINO

PG
Fridays 1:00, 3:00, 5:00, 7:00, 9:00. *Sexual content, coarse language.*

NOTORIOUS

PG
Fridays 1:00, 3:00, 5:00, 7:00, 9:00. *Violence.*

REVOLUTIONARY ROAD

14A
Fridays 1:00, 3:00, 5:00, 7:00, 9:00. *Coarse language, mature themes.*

BEDTIME STORIES

Fridays 1:00, 3:00, 5:00, 7:00, 9:00. *Frightening scenes.*

INKHEART

PG
Fridays 1:00, 3:00, 5:00, 7:00, 9:00. *Frightening scenes.*

PAUL BLART: MALL COP

PG
Fridays 1:00, 3:00, 5:00, 7:00, 9:00. *Nudity, coarse content.*

CLAREVIEW 10 CINEMAS

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THE UNBORN

14A
Fridays 1:00, 3:00, 5:00, 7:00, 9:00. *Violence, frightening scenes.*

GRAN TORINO

14A
Fridays 1:00, 3:00, 5:00, 7:00, 9:00. *Sexual content, coarse language.*

NOTORIOUS

PG
Fridays 1:00, 3:00, 5:00, 7:00, 9:00. *Violence.*

REVOLUTIONARY ROAD

14A
Fridays 1:00, 3:00, 5:00, 7:00, 9:00. *Coarse language, mature themes.*

BEDTIME STORIES

Fridays 1:00, 3:00, 5:00, 7:00, 9:00. *Frightening scenes.*

INKHEART

PG
Fridays 1:00, 3:00, 5:00, 7:00, 9:00. *Frightening scenes.*

PAUL BLART: MALL COP

PG
Fridays 1:00, 3:00, 5:00, 7:00, 9:00. *Nudity, coarse content.*

CLAREVIEW 10 CINEMAS

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THE TALE OF DESPEREAUX

G
Fridays 1:00, 3:00, 5:00, 7:00, 9:00. *Violence.*

INKHEART

Fri 1:00, 3:00, 5:00, 7:00, 9:00; Sat/Sun 1:00, 4:10, 7:00, 9:40. *Frightening scenes.*

UNDERWORLD: THE RISE OF THE LYCANS

18A
Fri 1:00, 3:00, 5:00, 7:00, 9:00; Sat/Sun 1:00, 4:10, 7:00, 9:40. *Violence, coarse language.*

FROST/NIXON

PG
Fri 1:00, 3:00, 5:00, 7:00, 9:00; Sat/Sun 1:00, 4:10, 7:00, 9:40. *Violence, coarse language.*

BRIDE WARS

PG
Fri 1:00, 3:00, 5:00, 7:00, 9:00. *Violence.*

THE UNBORN

14A
Fri 1:00, 3:00, 5:00, 7:00, 9:00. *Violence, frightening scenes.*

BEDTIME STORIES

Fri 1:00, 3:00, 5:00, 7:00, 9:00. *Frightening scenes.*

INKHEART

PG
Fri 1:00, 3:00, 5:00, 7:00, 9:00. *Frightening scenes.*

PAUL BLART: MALL COP

PG
Fri 1:00, 3:00, 5:00, 7:00, 9:00. *Nudity, coarse content.*

CLAREVIEW 10 CINEMAS

4211-39TH AVENUE • 472-6000

THE TALE OF DESPEREAUX

G
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INKHEART

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"OEDIPUS REX MOVES WELL BEYOND BEING A MERE INFLUENCE, AND THERE'S EVEN A DISTINCT WHIFF OF M. NIGHT SHYAMALAN THROWN IN.

THEATRE REVIEW · OEDIPUS COMPLEX · BY MICHAEL HINGSTON | 605 words

Sand On The Stage, Sand In The Gears

WAJDI MOUAWAD'S *SCORCHED* AIMS FOR GREATNESS, BUT IS UNDONE BY INCREASINGLY PREPOSTEROUS PLOTTING

SCORCHED

Directed by Richard Rose. Written by Wajdi Mouawad.

Translated by Linda Gaboriau. Starring Sophie Goulet, Janick Hébert, Diana Leblanc, Sarah Ornstein, Gareth Potter, Rice Theatre, The Citadel. To Feb 1. Tickets

available through the Citadel box office (425-1820/citadeltheatre.com).
★★★☆☆

As you enter the Citadel's Rice Theatre, the set catches your eye right away: a commonplace desk and chairs sit at the centre, surrounded by tokens of the exotic. Towering, six-foot-tall Arabic tablets line the back of the stage. The entire floor is covered with six inches of desert sand, and a thin stream falls continuously from the ceiling, making a growing pyramid on the floor beside the desk.

This is the world of French-Canadian Wajdi Mouawad's *Scorched*, where a dead woman's final request forces her twin children Janine (Sophie Goulet) and Simon (Gareth Potter) to venture into her shocking and bloody past as a resistance fighter in an unspecified Middle Eastern civil war.

But while Richard Rose's production shows early moments of sublime poetry and tenderness, it quickly collapses under the weight of the moral seriousness and increasingly preposterous narrative twists in its second half. By the end, Mouawad's fondness for Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* has moved well beyond being a mere influence, and there's even a distinct whiff of M. Night Shyamalan thrown in.

As it begins, however, the play



Charred Target | Sophie Goulet requests directions from Jerry Frank in *Scorched*. PHOTO COURTESY OF CITADEL THEATRE

sucks you right in. Janine and Simon are each given a mysterious envelope — one is to be delivered to the father they were told was dead, and one to a brother they have never heard of. Neither sibling was close with Nawal in life — in part because she took a vow of silence for her final five years — and neither wants this last burden; Simon, a struggling amateur boxer, outwardly curses Nawal for finding a way to piss him off from beyond the grave, while Janine, a professor of abstract math, swallows her feelings.

The ensuing investigation also starts off nicely, with past and present overlapping as the story of Nawal at three different ages interlaces be-

tween Janine and Simon's struggles. And some truly superb images are set into motion: the hundreds of hours of Nawal's recorded silence that Janine obsessively listens to on a Walkman, combing for clues in her mother's breathing; or her lecture on polygon theory and visibility graphs, which would be a masterpiece of symbolism were it not explained into the ground early on and then dropped altogether.

In fact, the polygon lecture is symptomatic of *Scorched*'s larger problem, which is that much of what works in the first act is abandoned in the second, replaced by longer, preachier monologues and a convoluted plot that spins off irrevocably

into the stratosphere. The dialogue becomes more stilted, and entire new characters ring false, like the berserk sniper/Polaroid photographer with an inexplicable love for American pop culture.

The performances are mostly strong, but there are two clear standouts. In such a sombre and bleak landscape, Paul Rainville threatens to steal the entire production as the bumbling notary and will executor Alphonse, whose constant hand-wringing, too-short tie, and elegant malapropisms ("Rome wasn't built in the middle of the day," "fly in the appointment") provide desperately welcome comic relief. And as the teenaged Nawal forced to give up

her first child, the doe-eyed Janick Hébert is a harrowing presence. She doesn't have much to do apart from be hysterical and rage against her ultra-conservative village, but man, is she good at it.

Despite all of its shortcomings, *Scorched* is a play that I still find myself rooting for. Graeme S. Thomson's set design is inspired — none of the actors even flinch at having sand in their shoes for almost three hours — and Mouawad's ambitions as a playwright are commendable, and should be encouraged above all else. After all, the only way to achieve greatness is to aim squarely for it.

Better luck next time.



How Do You Like These Apples? | Actually, all that delectable-looking fruit decorating the set of *Grimmer Than Grimm* is probably poisonous — we are talking Germanic fairytale here, after all. PHOTO COURTESY OF RIBBITREPUBLIC

ARTS NEWS · NOTABLE HAPPENINGS FROM THE THEATRE TO THE BOOKSTORE

GRIMMIS!

Once Upon A Time ...

If you want to traumatize your children — and what beleaguered parent hasn't occasionally wanted to do just that? — there's no better tool than the folktales Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm collected in the 19th century. Full of evil women, sadistic violence, and gruesome punishments, they'll give any impressionable toddler nightmares for years ... which is why you should avoid bringing the kids to *Grimmer Than Grimm*, ribbitREpublic's fast-paced stage adaptation of the Grimms' most vicious yarns. It plays the Catalyst from Jan. 22-31 — be sure to leave a trail of breadcrumbs so you can find your way back home.

LIMBS!

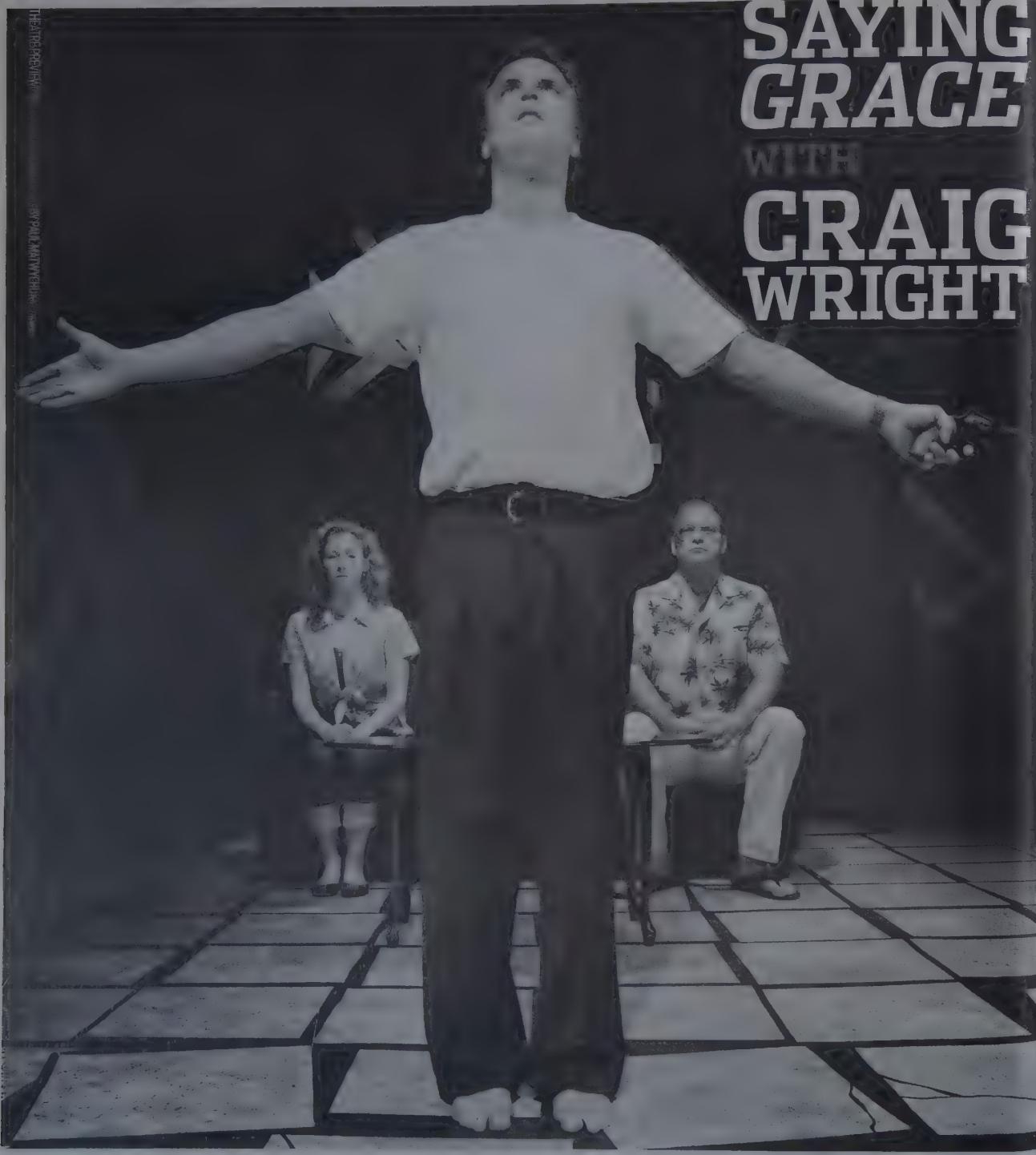
The Dancers Will Be Clothed

Google choreographer David Flewelling and the first thing that pops up is a 2007 story from the Montreal Mirror about the all-male naked yoga class he teaches. That was certainly an eye-opening way for Arts News to begin its day — but we're here to talk about something much classier than a group of naked, athletic men contorting their bodies. We're here to talk about a group of athletic women contorting their bodies: *Dance Motif 2009*, the annual showcase for the U of A student dance troupe Orchesis, which Flewelling helped choreograph. It runs Jan. 23-24 in Myer Horowitz Theatre.

BUDGET TRIMS!

First, The Good News...

It seems the post-literate age may take a while to come to Canada: according to a story this week in the Canadian Press, Canadian book sales rose six per cent in the last quarter of 2008, compared to 2007 sales during the same period. (They attribute the increase to publishers lowering book prices to reflect the value of the U.S. and Canadian dollar.) But don't pop the champagne just yet: *Quill & Quire* is reporting that *BookExpo*, a major industry event in Toronto, may be cancelled this year now that Penguin, HarperCollins, and Random House have all said they are cutting costs and will not be attending.



THE DIVINITY STUDENT TURNED AWARD-WINNING PLAYWRIGHT DISCUSSES GOD, FAITH, INTOLERANCE ... AND THE FLASH

GRACE

Directed by John Hudson. Written by Craig Wright. Starring Nathan Cuckow, Myla Southward, J.P. Fournier, Frank Zottler. Varscona Theatre (10329-83 Ave). Jan 22-Feb 8. Tickets available through Shadow Theatre (434-5564) or TIX on the Square (420-1757/www.tixonthesquare.ca)

At the end of my interview with playwright Craig Wright, I can't resist asking him about *The Flash*, the big-screen adaptation of the DC comic book whose script he worked on, along with *The Dark Knight* scribe David S. Goyer. It certainly seems like an anomaly in his list of credits, which include such plays as *The Pavilion*, *Orange Flower Water*, and

Recent *Tragic Events* and episodes of the TV shows *Six Feet Under* and *Brothers and Sisters* – dramas about unhappy marriages, infidelity, and complicated family relationships among aging Generation X-ers, without a single caped hero or insane supervillain anywhere in sight.

Wright admits he's not an aficionado of superheroes – unless you count Jesus, whose exploits Wright became very familiar with during his years as a divinity student at St. John's University in Minneapolis – but says that wasn't what drew him to *The Flash*. "I've always been interested in time," he says. "And the thing about *The Flash* as a hero is that because his superpower is speed, it throws him into a very complicated relationship with time. As we all know, $E = MC^2$, squared, and time is linked to speed, so the faster we go, the slower time seems. So that throws someone like *The Flash* into a disjunction with the people closest to him, and if he tries to live

as a human being in the meantime, that makes things very difficult for him. That's what interested me in the story."

Wright's no longer involved with the project, he says – these blockbuster film projects routinely go through screenwriter after screenwriter – so who knows how much of Wright's concept will survive when the film hits the screen in 2010, but for now, he's actually got me interested in *The Flash*.

And come to think of it, the characters in his play *Grace*, which opens this week at Shadow Theatre, have an unusual relationship with time as well: the violent first scene, in which a would-be hotel magnate named Steve shoots his wife and then himself, even takes place in reverse, with the dialogue going backwards and dead characters coming back to life and popping back up on their feet. They have a strange relationship to space as well: the play takes place simultaneously in two identical Florida condominiums that are represented onstage by a single set. In other words, we see what's happening in the two rooms at the very same time – imagine one scene being laid atop the other, like two transparent sheets of plastic on an overhead projector.

But *Grace* has more on its mind than theatrical gimmicks: it's really a play about faith, and four people whose belief in God is tested in various ways. At the centre of the play are Steve and Sara, a Christian couple who have come to Florida to start up what Steve predicts will be the next big thing in the hospitality industry: a nationwide chain of Christian hotels. But as the financing for the project falls apart, Sara finds herself drawn to Sam, the occupant of the neighbouring condo, who has lost his wife in a gruesome car accident. And lurking on the periphery of the story is Karl, an exterminator bearing horrible emotional scars from the Second World War, and whose rejection of God serves as a powerful rebuke to Steve's blithe belief that the Almighty is always up there looking out for him.

I spoke to Wright last week over the phone from his home in Los Angeles as he prepared breakfast before heading off to the set of *Dirty Sexy Money*, the nighttime TV soap he created and runs for ABC.

SEE Magazine: You've been heavily involved in writing for TV over the last six or seven years, but you've also kept a hand in the theatre world. How does your time break down, percentage-wise?

Craig Wright: I guess it's probably about 60/40 – 60 television and 40 plays, with movies getting the additional 10 per cent over 100. [Laughs.]

SEE: Was that always your goal, to move into television? Or were you sort of recruited at some point?

CW: I was recruited, I'd say. I mean, I was always interested in TV, but I was never dying to break into it either. But then my theatre agent asked if I wanted her to send a play of mine to some agents in Hollywood, and I got a call one day from this agent saying they thought I might be right for *Six Feet Under* and asking if I wanted to meet Alan Ball. And I was working in Minnesota at the time, working at a church as an assistant minister. Now, the offer didn't come out of left field – I had authorized my agent to send the scripts out, after all – but I certainly wasn't about to go out to L.A. looking for work either.

SEE: You studied very seriously to become a minister and presumably have spent a lot of time thinking about the Bible and your relationship to the Creator. And between that period of your life and the writing of *Grace*, you spent several years in godless Hollywood. Have your ideas about God changed during that time?

CW: Well, not much. I don't agree with this notion of "godless Hollywood." That's not really the way the world is, as far as I'm concerned – and that's really what the play's about. Whenever you concoct these dichotomies ... I mean, you could say that God isn't in culture, that culture represents all the worst forms of human endeavour and that God resides over there in religion, apart from culture. But I think that's an inaccurate dichotomy. Religion itself is just as culturally proscribed as any Hollywood movie. The activity of the divine is always delivered, so to speak, from within a cultural context – whether it's the context of religion or Hollywood, or science. You can't get to the divine without culture. You can't have an experience of the divine without accessing it within a cultural context. So my views about God haven't really changed. But I will say that my willingness to experi-



WE'RE ALL IN THE SAME ROOM, THEOLOGICALLY SPEAKING. IT'S ALL CAUSE AND EFFECT, AND NO WALLS CAN STOP IT FROM HAPPENING.

“

ment boldly with theatrical convention increased the longer I stayed in Hollywood. The more writing I did in Hollywood, where I had to deliver naturalism, the more experimental my writing for the theatre became.

SEE: And that's certainly the case with *Grace*, where you have the action taking place in two locations at once. How early in the writing did that idea come to you? Was it a solution to a staging problem, or was it all bound up with the themes you wanted to explore?

CW: I always tell young writers that as you get older, you don't get better at getting ideas, but you get better at knowing when they're bad. As I began thinking about this play, I think it took me about 13 seconds to realize that alternating between two rooms would rapidly become a tiresome binary rhythm. So I thought, "Well, let's put everybody in the same room" – and lo and behold, things got really, really interesting, because now Sara could be talking to her husband about the guy next door and the guy could be sitting on the sofa right there between them. It became a very vivid metaphor for this idea that we're really not separated at all. There are no secrets; we're all in the same room, theologically speaking. It's all cause and effect, and no walls can stop it from happening.

SEE: It's such a tricky convention to explain to someone who hasn't seen the play. Was it a challenge to find an elegant way to establish this convention for the audience right at the top of the play?

CW: I think people are very confused at the beginning of the play, but if they look back and remember, I think they were probably very confused when they were born. You know, life is confusing. I've written plays that start other ways – at the start of *The Pavilion*, I explain everything to the audience. But I think *Grace* is about a different experience of life, a confusing experience of life – Steve, who's at the heart of the play, finds life absolutely baffling, so I think it's good to start the play that way.

SEE: The play is very sharp about a certain kind of American religious entrepreneurialism, where faith in God is all bound up with a kind of boundless capitalistic optimism. He's not a phony. He's very sincere.

CW: I love that phrase you used, "religious entrepreneurialism." Another way of talking about it is "manifest destiny." How can I put this? If it weren't sincere, it wouldn't have worked so well for so long, you know? It isn't until chance fucks you over and suddenly you get a few bad rolls of the dice that you begin to question your reasoning.

SEE: There are so many great details to the character: the way he says "Dog!" instead of "God!" when he wants to swear, the way he has a sales pitch ready to refute any possible argument against the existence of God. It feels like there had to be some real-life models that went into writing *Steve*.

CW: Well, I don't know what to tell you. I just made it all up. Now, that said, I was a born-again Christian for quite a while, and I did spend a lot of time with people who had their pitch and who could just launch right into it. By the way, I find Steve's argument kind of interesting – you think he's going to start from a place of judgment, but in fact he starts from a place of pretty deep theological reasoning. He says there's nothing in the world that could have made the world, which is like something from the ninth century, like something from St. Anselm. His argument is actually pretty good! And he's

also pretty accurate about Sam's emotional state, when he says, "You're mad. You're mad at God." Like most of us, he's absolutely right about everybody else and absolutely wrong about himself. H. Richard Niebuhr had a great quote that I like to think about a lot: he said, "Most people are right about what they affirm and wrong about what they deny."

SEE: Are you at all conscious when you write about the attitude your audience, which is probably going to be pretty secular, is going to come in with when it comes to an overtly religious character?

CW: I'd say yes and no. I'm not oblivious to the habits of the theatre audience. But I still pretty much write what interests me. That said, I'm not that different from the average left-leaning theatregoer. I will say that if there's anything that offends me, it's the sophomoric dismissal of religious people – and I mean that in both ways. I don't like it when religious people sophomorically dismiss culture, and I don't like it when secular people sophomorically dismiss religion. It always amazes me: you can be with people who are so intelligent ... I have a friend in Hollywood, and I mentioned Catholicism to him and he said, "Oh, aren't those the people who worship Mary?" The idea that that person with a college degree, who's very, very intelligent, that this could be his bumper-sticker understanding of the Catholic faith.... We all have the worst possible stereotypes of other people's religion, we have no information, and we have no interest in getting it. It seems so apparent to me, given the state of the world, that every elementary school student should be given a little primer in Islam. I mean, don't you want to understand the rest of the world?

SEE: *Grace* has a lot of religious themes running around it, and there's more than one scene where the characters debate their faith with each other, but I don't think it seems didactic. Did that take some doing in the writing of it? Is there a trick you've found to keeping those scenes from bogging down and making them dramatic rather than thematic?

CW: Well, I'd never write a scene just to make a point like that. But the people in my plays have ideas. And the things they're doing to each other, the way they're treating each other, are because of the ideas in their head. In *Grace*, it's their ideas about God that bring them into conflict. In *The Pavilion*, it's their ideas about time. In *Recent Tragic Events*, my play about 9/11, it's their ideas about America and free will. I'm always aware of my characters having ideas, but I don't write to explicate the idea. So I don't create a scene to make a point; if anything, I find myself gradually making better points because it makes a better scene.

SEE: Do you think a chain of religious-themed hotels is a good idea? Would you have invested in this project?

CW: I think it's a tremendous idea! I wonder why nobody's started it yet! I mean, if you were on the road with your hard-working family, and you have a certain set of values, and you knew there was a hotel where there wasn't going to be a bar with a bunch of drunks or hookers wandering around the lobby, and you knew there would be a chapel on site ... I think it's an amazing idea! Of course, inevitably, those hotels would wind up having just as much drinking and just as many hookers as the normal hotels. But business-wise, it's a fabulous idea. I'm not sure why it hasn't happened.

Does The Public Enjoy Public Art?



**ART BOX MANDY ESPEZEL & JILL STANTON
IF PUBLIC ART IS MEANT TO
BRING COMMUNITIES TOGETHER, WHY DOES EVERYONE
ARGUE SO MUCH ABOUT IT?**

This week, Jill and Mandy break free of the confines of the gallery and explore the streets of Edmonton with *The Places: Art and Design in Public Places*, a project by The Works Visual Arts Society. The walking tour and other information about the projects can be found at www.theworks.ab.ca.

Jill: As you wander the streets of downtown Edmonton and the surrounding area, you can't help but notice a few of the public visual arts projects put on by The Works. The Works' mission for these publicly artistic spots began as part of the Capital City Downtown Plan back in 1997 the goal was to revitalize the downtown area and create a set of

shared visual heirlooms which would continue to be appreciated by generations to come. There's even a website that organizes them into a walking tour, beginning with "Big Rock" by Catherine Burgess and Sandra Bromley in the middle of Rice Howard Way. Of course, being pretty fond of public art in general, we decided to hit this trail up, didn't we, Mandy?

Mandy: Um, in a manner of speaking, yes. After all, the role of public art in a community has been coming up a lot lately, both in this column and in the city at large. I also figured that our ridiculously bleak winter only made me hungrier to finally get outside. Does Edmonton's public art revitalize our vastly gray and cement downtown for you, Miss Jill?

Jill: Yes, and here's the thing: I agree whole-heartedly with the idea of creating public spaces that are easy on the eye – especially in a city like Edmonton, whose grim winter landscape isn't exactly a mecca of beautiful. I think it's important that while health care and education are worthy recipients of our taxes, we also need to recognize the role that the visual arts plays in our community as a way to bring Edmontonians together and create environments in which we'd like to live. I see public art almost like

infrastructure: it's not some kind of frivolous luxury; in fact, it's entirely necessary to the inner workings of a city and its people.

Mandy: And I would say most people would agree with that notion – or at least the idea that public art, common visual landmarks, contributes to the idea of a shared cultural identity. Of course, things get trickier when people decide they don't like a particular work – that's when you start hearing people talk about city hall wasting public dollars.

Jill: I think this is the sticky issue. For instance, I'm not sure Edmontonians are fully aware of the scope of the *Places* project, or that their tax dollars (aided by large corporate sponsorships) are being spent on it. Which is not to say that I have any qualms at all about this project; I just think that perhaps the community should be allowed to play a more active role in selecting public art. Most of the public (and publicly funded) art pieces around the city were selected behind closed doors by a small jury of people considered to be "in the know." Why shouldn't ordinary citizens participate in the selection process too, thereby creating a space that truly involves and describes them?

Mandy: You know what this is reminding me of? In 1981, the acclaimed sculptor Richard Serra created a piece called *Tilted Arc* for an area outside the Federal Plaza in New York City. The people who approved and funded it knew exactly what it would look like: it was this massive metal sculpture which leaned out over the people as they left or entered the building. But once the sculpture was completed, all the employees hated it so much that they eventually



Banner Headline | One of Rice Howard Way's "sculptural banners," part of The Places public art project. PHOTO BY ANDREW PAUL

lobbied to have it removed. It was a big epic battle between the rights of the artist and what the people who actually had to interact with the artist's work thought of it. Even *The Gates*, Christo's huge installation in Central Park – Christo paid for those himself, and it was still this huge, 25-year struggle to get the project realized. When it comes to art, gaining majority approval from the public is very elusive.

Jill: I suppose so. And you're right: we've had fiascos like that, even in Edmonton. Take the Sculpture by Invitation location, another initiative from The Works, which created

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EXHIBITS

100 STORIES ABOUT MY GRANDMOTHER LATITUDE

52, 10248 106TH ST., JAN 9 - FEB 14 Body of work by Peter Kingstone giving voices to 100 sex trade workers.

THE ADVANTAGED: THE ARTERY, 9535 JASPER AVE., JAN 24 - FEB 24 Curated by Anna Coe and Amelia Aspen Shultz-McPherson. Featuring works by several contemporary artists from Edmonton and Calgary housing on the artistic community of their cities.

ART EN LA CHARRETE ROYAL ALBERTA MUSEUM, 12845 102ND AVE., OCT 25 - APR 3 More than 120 examples of craftsmanship and design distinctive to the Mexican cowboy. Info: www.myroyalAlbertamuseum.ca.

CAR CULTURE RED GALLERY, 9621 WHYTE AVE., JAN 8 - APR 30 Oil paintings by Christ Bergstrom on Edmonton's car culture landscape. Info: www.redgallery.ca.

COMMON CONTRAST MCQUEEN GALLERY, 8440 112TH ST., JAN 10 - MAR 8 Black and white photography by The Monochrome Guild.

CONTINENCE STEPPES GALLERY, 1259 91ST AVE., JAN 22 - MAR 17 Mixed media installation by Layne Chalmers.

CROOKED HEAD LATITUDE 53, 10249 106TH ST., JAN 9 - FEB 14 Painting by Sean Montgomery focusing on the issue of masculinity.

THE ESSENCE GALLERY AT MILNER, STANLEY A. MILNER LIBRARY, CHURCHILL SQUARE, JAN 2 - JAN 30 Nature photography by Sinik Carter.

GROUP SHOW CENTRE D'ARTS VISUELS DE L'ALBERTA, 9103 95TH AVE., JANS - FEB 5 Works from more than 130 different artists including paintings, sculptures and pottery.

GROWING TOGETHER HOME AND AWAY UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA CAMPUS, JAN 26 - FEB 6 Features artwork by Nhan Lu, Aly Mora, Enika Vela Narischchi and Gloria Villamil focusing on their experiences of being an immigrant. In Henderson Hall from 9:30 p.m.

HOME MUDDY WATERS, 8211 111TH ST., JAN 3 - JAN 31 Photo exhibit by Ongor One focusing on the theme of peace, justice, equality, dignity and humanity.

HEIGHTS OF FASHION: A HISTORY OF THE Elevated FOOT ROYAL ALBERTA MUSEUM, 12845 102ND AVE., NOV 27 - MAR 2 An exhibition of daring footwear from the Bata Shoe Museum.

THE HORIZON AS IT SHOULD BE ART GALLERY OF ALBERTA, #100 10230 JASPER AVE., JAN 17 - MAR 22 Digital photography exploring the relationship between people and spaces by John Freeman.

IMAGINING SCIENCE ART GALLERY OF ALBERTA, #100 10230 JASPER AVE., NOV 20 - FEB 1 Exhibit examining the impact of the rapidly changing world of genetics, bio-technologies and human engineering and the challenges and controversies that come with it. Info: www.artsy.ca.

artgalleryalberta.com

INTENSIONS: MESSAGE & MEDIUM IN FIBRE ART

ALBERTA CRAFT COUNCIL, 10186 106TH ST., JAN 17 - APR 18

With works by Mary Sullivan-Holdgrafe, Margie Davidson and Matt Gould. Info: www.albertacraft.ca.

MANATEE MAMARIES PRINCE GALLERIES, 10516 WHYTE AVE., JAN 3 - JAN 31 Mixed media installation by Mandy Espezel and Travis McEwan.

MIRACLE PENNIES HARCOURT HOUSE GALLERY, 3RD FLOOR, 10215 107TH ST., JAN 8 - FEB 14 Photography by Nate Larson exploring the way that we construct meaning in contemporary culture through the lenses of religion, consumer behavior, and secular mythologies. Info: www.harcourtHouse.ab.ca.

RELATIONSHIPS AND INVESTIGATIONS SCOTT GALLERY, 10441 124TH ST., JAN 17 - JAN 27 Group exhibition that explores relationships and investigations of the land. With works by Martha Cole, Noni Boyle, Dick Det, Marianne Watchel, Harold Feist, Phyllis Anderson and Ariene Maslyndukh.

SYLVIAN VOVSEY: SURVEY 1957 - PRESENT ART GALLERY OF ALBERTA, #100 10230 JASPER AVE., JAN 17 - MAR 22 Paintings by Sylvain Vovsey spanning his 50-year career.

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THE EDMONTON QUEEN: THE FINAL VOYAGE TRAN-SALTA ARTS BARN, 1030 84TH AVE., JAN 22 - FEB 1 Darren Hagen takes the stage again for his one man show about a

family of drag queens who make a night club the centre all Edmonton's queer community in the 1980s.

THE EMPEROR'S NEW THREADS THE ARDEN THEATRE, 85 ANNE ST., ST. ALBERT, JAN 24 Melody and Peter Anderson adapt Hans Christian Andersen's fairytale about an emperor with an insatiable ego and poor fashion sense.

GRAN VARSCONA THEATRE, 1029 83RD AVE., JAN 22 - FEB 8 John Hudson directs Nathan Cudow and Frank Zetter in American playright Craig Wright's play about religion, guns and salesmanship in sunny Florida.

GRIMMER THAN GRIMM CATALYST THEATRE, 8529 GATEWAY BLVD., JAN 22 - FEB 1 Inhabit Republik presents the tales of the brothers Grimm with a satiric twist. Info: www.theatrepub.ca.

PIRATES OF THE NORTH SASKATCHEWAN II JUBILATION'S DINNERN THEATRE, 1253 WEST EDMONTON MALL, 8882-100 ST., NOV 5 - JAN 24 Jubilation dinners theatre presents a spoof of Disney's Pirates of the Caribbean.

Directed by Randy Aostoe.

SCORCHED CITADEL THEATRE, 9828 101A AVE., JAN 10 - FEB 17 Richard Rose directs Valerie Buhagiar, Jerry Franken, Sophie Goulet, Janek Hebert, Diana LeBlanc in Wajdi Mouawad's play about two siblings' journey into their dead mother's past.

THEATRESPORTS VARSCONA THEATRE, 10329 83RD AVE. Weekly improv show hosted by Rapid Fire Theatre every Fri. Doors at 11 p.m.

THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE JOHN L. HAAR THEATRE, 10045 105TH ST. MACLEAN CAMPUS, JAN 23 - JAN 31 Based on the 1967 film that starred Julie Andrews and Mary Tyler Moore this will be the second performance of MacEwan theatre season.

THREE MO' TENORS CITADEL THEATRE, 9828 101A AVE., JAN 24 - FEB 15 Conceived and directed by Marion J. Caffey Info: www.citadeltheatre.com.

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KINN MOCHRUE & GRAD SHERWOOD RIVER FREE RESORT AND CASINO, WHITEMUD DR. AND WHITEMUD RD., ENOCH, JAN 26 - FEB 10 Enoch Jan 26 Doors at 7 p.m.

DAMON WAYANS RIVER CREE RESORT AND CASINO, WHITEMUD DR. AND WHITEMUD RD., ENOCH, JAN 25 Doors at 7 p.m.

DAN LEVY THE COMIC STRIP BOURBON STREET - WEST EDMONTON MALL, JAN 21 - JAN 23 With Marty McLean and Shawn Graniak. Doors at 8 p.m.

DAN LEVY THE COMIC STRIP BOURBON STREET - WEST EDMONTON MALL, JAN 25 With Kelly Soloduka and Shawn Graniak. Doors at 8 p.m.

DAVID MERRY THE COMIC STRIP BOURBON STREET - WEST EDMONTON MALL, JAN 31 - JAN 31 With Tyler Hawkins and The Bear's Paul Brown. Doors at 8 p.m.

HIT OR MISS MONDAYS THE COMIC STRIP BOURBON STREET - WEST EDMONTON MALL, JAN 15 - JAN 17 Amateur comedy. Info: www.thecomicstrip.ca 780-483-5999.

THE LION'S HEAD PUB COMEDY NIGHT featuring professional & amateur comedians. No cover. Hosted by Lars Calliou. Every Sun at 9 p.m.

MARTY HANENBERG COMEDY FACTORY, 408-3414 GATEWAY BLVD., JAN 22 - JAN 24

NORM MACDONALD THE COMIC STRIP BOURBON STREET - WEST EDMONTON MALL, JAN 24 Doors at 8 p.m.

THEATRE

CANOE THEATRE FESTIVAL JAN 20 - JAN 25

Workshop West presents five days of theatre in two venues. Third Space (10516 103rd St.). Scrapping the Surface by Lyle Victor Albert runs Jan 21, 24 and 25. This is Cancer by Bruce Horak and Rebecca Norton runs Jan 22, 24 and 25. Second Playing Space (Timms Centre for the Arts, 87th Ave. and 112th St.); One by Jason Carnew runs Jan 20, 22 and 25. Body Fragments by Theaterlabors runs Jan 21, 23 and 24. Magpie Now (Part 1) by Theatre Prospero runs Jan 23-25. Show times and info: www.workshopwest.org.

CHIMPROM VARSCONA THEATRE, 1029 83RD AVE., JAN 20 - JAN 25 Weekly improv show hosted by Rapid Fire Theatre every Sat featuring the top troupes of the Canadian improv scene. Doors at 11 p.m.

DIE-NASTY VARSCONA THEATRE, 10329 83RD AVE., JAN 8 - JAN 18 An improvised soap opera directed by Dara Andersen. Every Mon at 8 p.m.

THE EDMONTON QUEEN: THE FINAL VOYAGE TRAN-SALTA ARTS BARN, 1030 84TH AVE., JAN 22 - FEB 1 Darren Hagen takes the stage again for his one man show about a

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Hey, Congress: Why Not Bail Out The Porn Industry?



MY MESSY BEDROOM JOSEY VOGELS

LARRY FLYNT HAS A POINT:**CHANGING TECHNOLOGY****MEANS XXX SALES HAVE GONE FROM ROBUST TO LIMP**

I presume that Joe Francis (the guy behind *Girls Gone Wild*) and Larry Flynt (founder of *Hustler* magazine) had their tongues firmly in cheek when they went to the government cap in hand earlier this month asking for a \$5 billion bailout for the adult entertainment industry. (Mind you, government officials have undoubtedly already been personally propelling up the sex trade for decades, but that's another story.)

Francis and Flynt claim that the tanking economy has damped America's libido and the smut trade is taking the hit, with XXX DVD sales down 22 per cent. "With all this

economic misery and people losing all that money, sex is the farthest thing from their mind," said Flynt. "It's time for Congress to rejuvenate the sexual appetite of America." There is undoubtedly some truth behind Flynt and Francis' thinly disguised publicity stunt. Paying for sexual entertainment may certainly be less of a priority in hard economic times. However, Flynt's claims about America's limp libido are rather dubious. In fact, statistics traditionally show that birth rates tend to go up after times of recession — in part

phy gave way to film, film to video and eventually DVD, DVD to the Internet. The difference with online porn is the extent to which it transformed the commercial playing field. Much as the music industry lumbered like a dinosaur into the Internet age, the porn industry's traditional model is also becoming outdated.

Frankly, I'm glad. The music industry may have been a groundbreaking, dynamic field in its early days, but it has devolved into an overly commercial, formulaic conveyor belt of "overnight sensations" and cookie-

ninjas, missionary intercourse, doggy-style, come-on-face. It's pretty much the same every time, just different actors in different surroundings. It may do the trick, but surely we can do better.

And people are, thanks to the Internet. In fact, I'm actually surprised DVD sales are only down 22 per cent. After all, why rent a DVD when you can stream porn on the Internet in the privacy of your own home?

As sex writer Violet Blue said in a piece offering her predictions for 2009: "[With] an entire industry

"THE BUSINESS MODEL OF CHURNING OUT 12,000 DVDS A YEAR PACKED WITH COOKIE-CUTTER STARLETS IS LIKELY GOING TO COLLAPSE LIKE A HOUSE OF TIRED OLD CARDS."

because people have less money to spend on outside entertainment and have to stay home and make their own fun. The truth is, there are other plenty of other factors to explain the decline of the traditional adult entertainment industry.

The biggest factor, of course, is changing technology. Adult entertainment has always been vulnerable to technological advances. Photo-

cutter music. But the Internet has allowed musicians to once again seize the reins of production and distribution, making room for creativity, integrity, and a responsiveness to what audiences want instead of the other way around.

Same with porn. I've long been tired of the predictability and lack of imagination in mainstream porn encounter clothes off, blowjob, cun-

built on DVD sales, consumers who now can now choose to watch porn they actually like [online], YouTube-style services such as YouPorn.com and xTube.com that provide not just searchability, but free, authentic user-generated content, it looks like this might finally be the year the business model of churning out 12,000 DVDs a year packed with cookie-cutter starlets and boring sex-by-the-numbers is likely going to collapse like a house of tired old cards."

It will be interesting to see how the mainstream companies adjust. Obviously, most of them are in on the online action. But, again, the Internet is

a strange beast and working business models are tough to nail down when people can make, post, and get content for free.

Of course, while Internet porn allows for an increasing level of diversity, allowing the Buck Angels of the world access to a much wider audience, the sheer volume available online is intimidating. Who has time to sort through it all? As a result, most of us default to the same stuff we've been spoonfed for so long.

In his sexuality column for about.com, Cory Silverberg (co-owner of Toronto sex shop Come As You Are) predicts that, when it comes to the future of porn, "being able to take folks through the options and help them find something that doesn't just do the trick but opens new doors will be a valuable service." A sort of "porn concierge service," if you will.

As for the future of traditional porn, I'd love to see these companies focus on quality rather than quantity, putting out fewer but better, more interesting titles, rather than churning out more of the same.

Sexual imagery will no doubt always be in demand. As a result even without a bailout, I'm pretty sure the porn industry will survive in one form or another. But how we "consume" porn is changing, and the porn industry has to change too. And personally, I find that pretty exciting.

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Make Your Wife Happy And Get On The Stick



SAVAGE LOVE DAN SAVAGE
DAN DRESSES DOWN ANOTHER GUY TOO THREATENED BY HIS WIFE'S VIBRATOR TO PLEASE HER PROPERLY IN BED

I love the wife I married two years ago, but she absolutely can't come unless she uses a vibrator on herself. She's asked me to let her use it during sex or for me to use it on her, but I've refused. It's bad enough knowing I can't compete with that thing without having to look at it.

Let's Insert My Prick

Yeah, yeah, LIMP, you can't compete. Like a lot of other men, you've fallen in love with a woman who needs intense, focused stimulation in order to come, the kind of sensation that hands, fingers, tongues, and cocks just can't provide — a woman who requires a vibrator. Now let's take a little time to grieve, shall we?

Time's up.

Now stop being such a douchebag about this, LIMP, and go ask the wife to show you just how to hold the vibrator and just where to apply pressure so that you — YOU! — can start giving her orgasms during sex. See the vibrator as a tool, moron, not a threat. If you love your wife and want her to stay married to you, LIMP, get on the proverbial stick. Because if being with you means going without orgasms during sex for the rest of her life — all because she was foolish enough to marry an insecure bag of slop who refuses to do what needs to be done to get her off — then your wife just might decide to be with someone else.

And now an important message for all straight guys everywhere: Some women need vibrators to get off. Why? Well, perhaps it has something to do with the fact that most of a woman's clitoral tissues are inside her body; the exposed part of her clitoris is just the tip, comparable to the head of your penis. Now imagine if the shaft of your penis was buried inside your body, guys. You might need the help of a vibrator to get off then, too; you might need a tool that could stimulate your shaft through layers of skin and muscle and fat. We've been over and over this since the early 1990s, fellas, and there's no excuse anymore for freaking out about your wife/girlfriend/mom needing a vibrator, okay?

But any ladies feeling smug about guys feeling insecure about your sex toys might want to check out RealTouch, a new sex toy for men. A self-lubricating, self-heating sex toy with gears and belts and bells and whistles, the RealTouch simulates — somehow or other — the sensations of twats, asses, and mouths, according to its manufacturers. It can be plugged into a computer and synced up with porn clips so that it speeds up, slows down, grips, whatever, in time with the speeding up, slowing down, gripping, and whatever that you're watching on the screen.

While I doubt a RealTouch is going to "make all of your fantasies come true" (unless you've always fantasized about getting your dick caught in a coked-up DustBuster), it looks like we're one step closer to those sexbots we've heard so much about. We're certainly closer to sex toys for men that women are going to feel like they have a hard time competing with. (I know, ladies, yes. But the Internet isn't technically a sex toy.)

Now, I haven't placed my cock in a RealTouch, so I'm not vouching for it. I'm also not remotely interested in trying out a first-generation RealTouch, because I don't want the thing going all *Westworld* on me with my cock jammed inside it. (Readers under the age of 35 might want to ask someone over 35 to explain the *Westworld* reference.) So please don't send me one, manufacturers. But anyone out there who has tried one and lived to tell the tale, I'd like to hear from you at mail@savagelove.net.

I'm 19 years old and gay and a virgin. Now I've met a guy I kind of like. He's hot, great body. He wanted to fuck me, to be my first, the night we met, but I'm not sure I want to have anal sex. He insisted that we didn't need to

use a condom, since I'm a virgin and he's "clean," and got kind of upset when I tried to say no. I'm going to see him again, and I don't think I'll be able to make the same excuse again. (I told him I wasn't feeling "empty" enough to do it that night.)

What do I say to get him to use condoms? I don't want to drive him off, because he's really hot. But I don't want to be unsafe or get HIV or even have anal sex right now.

Just Out Newbie

We've covered this issue before, too, JON — but, gee, the last time I answered a letter from a gay kid in your situation was, um, when you were 12. But the advice I gave Bright Kid, Big City back then still applies now, so here it goes:

Look, JON, any faggot who wants to fuck you in the ass without a condom is the LAST PERSON ON EARTH you should be having sex with — anal or otherwise, condoms or no condoms. Guys who pressure you into having sex without condoms are having or have had unsafe sex with other people, which means that they're either infected already or will be shortly. If you don't want to get infected, your best course of action when a guy pressures you into having sex without condoms — or any kind of sex you're not comfortable with — is to pull up your pants and leave.

And since you're not particularly interested in anal sex right now, JON, I'd urge you to tell the guys you do go home with that you're just not up for getting fucked. An aversion to anal sex when you're young and just out and easily manipulated is something you should hold on to, JON, even cultivate. Skipping anal sex during your great-big-slut, just-coming-out, making-your-mistakes phase will greatly reduce your risk of contracting HIV and a host of other

STIs. Then one day, with luck you'll meet a nice, decent guy, also hot, who wants to take things slow — a guy who isn't a manipulative, selfish, barebacking piece of shit. And when you meet that guy, JON, you can explore anal with someone who cares about you enough to take it slow and wear condoms.

Anal sex, despite the impression created by HIV "prevention" materials you may have encountered, should not be a first-date activity. Reserve your asshole for guys you're serious about, JON, and for guys who are serious about you. The hot motherfucker you're seeing right now isn't worthy. Walk away.

Rick Warren is really fat, so maybe "saddlebacking" could be a new name for the act we chub chasers call "bellyfucking," which is a stupid name. Basically, saddlebacking would be straddling your fat

mate and then humping his belly until you come all over his face and chest.

Love Guys' Big Tummies

Sorry, LGBT, but the nominating process is closed. Volunteers are counting the votes and recounting the votes and double-checking the votes — it's fucking Minnesota around here. Right now, two definitions are neck and neck: It looks like "saddlebacking" is either going to be "gay anal sex with a condom (the opposite of barebacking)" or "a term for the phenomenon of Christian teens engaging in unprotected anal sex in order to preserve their virginties." Results next week!

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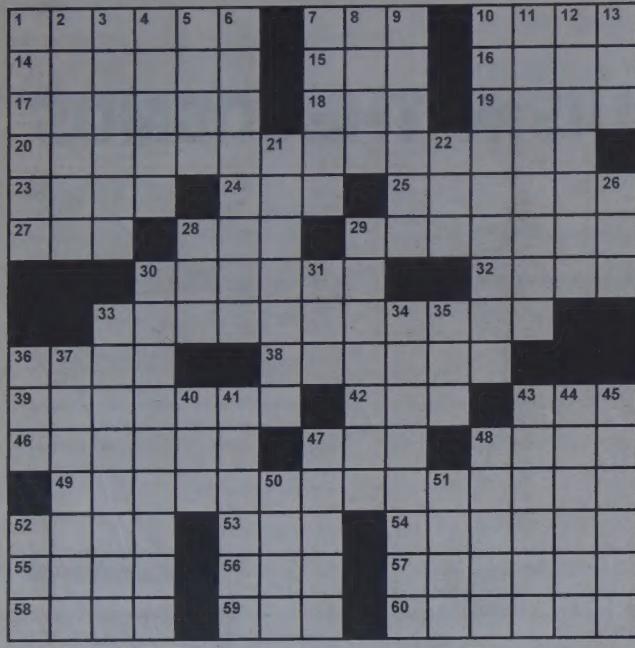
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UNSEL AMORE ARGO
IMAM OMEER INGO
CEMENT MIXED BUT
KEANU ZERDIN
STS DITKA GEDDE
METAL MAILBOX
ARENA ALIASSI
MARIO EMI EUX
SHARK STOMP GPS
CATERS MOORE
RBI AMENDMENTIX
AONE OHARA EHOU
YU TROX KOBEMA MMIX

SOLUTION TO LAST WEEK'S PUZZLE

- ACROSS**
- 1 Speeding punishment
 - 7 Hydromassage facility
 - 10 Mr. of the soft drink world
 - 14 In heaven, in some Christmas carols
 - 15 L.A. Lakers center Gasol
 - 16 ___ about
 - 17 Hulabaloo
 - 18 "The Addams Family" cousin
 - 19 "Just let ___ man"
 - 20 "Try to chew your food a little more—don't scarf it" phrase?
 - 21 Dalai ___
 - 24 Toddler's query
 - 25 Dr. Evil's assistant
 - 27 Spud bud
 - 28 Fed. construction overseer
 - 29 Like books without a numbered system
 - 30 Drinks soup
 - 32 Cloister group
 - 33 Beat a NYC college athletic team?
 - 36 Blue-green
 - 38 "Spare ___" ("Ground control to Major Tom" song)
 - 39 Like crust covering some hard-to-clean dishes
 - 42 3-D graphics in movie special effects, for short
 - 43 Common soccer score
 - 46 Oriole Park at ___ Yards
 - 47 It's illegal to pump yourself in Oregon
 - 48 Pod variety
 - 49 Whiz only on footprint indentations?
 - 52 "Janie's Got ___" (Aerosmith song)
 - 53 2007's Super Bowl
 - 54 Yes-man's response
 - 55 Put up
 - 56 "The Tonight Show" announcer Hall
 - 57 Nicole of "Charles in Charge"

SIGNAL AHEAD

AW, THE LIGHT JUST CHANGED

JONESIN' CROSSWORD BY MATT JONES
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58 Analogy words

59 Get the picture

60 Calls the shots

DOWN

1 Mess up hair

2 Like balls used during a game

3 Bumper material

4 Plains Native American tribe that becomes a state if you drop the first letter

5 Quaint outburst

6 Loses what was originally put down?

7 Like cacti

8 Way to go

9 Back to school season

10 Ability to make a lasting impression

11 Whodunit theme

12 Imaginary threats (var.)

13 "My man!"

21 Penn's school of business

22 "Tuck"

26 Publishers' hires, for short

28 Day ___

29 Item on a lot

30 It's given after a great performance

31 University conferral

33 Overcome an obstacle

34 Fluffy rooms

35 "Feliz cumpleaños ___" ("Happy Birthday To You," in Spanish)

36 1970 hit for The Jackson 5

37 Extinct African mammals related to zebras

40 Judge's highest rating, on "Dancing with the Stars"

41 Translucent quartzes

43 Mother-of-pearl materials

44 Comic book workers

45 Get beat by

47 Zagat Survey, e.g.

48 Prone to complain

50 ___ English 800 (Miller malt liquor)

51 Sitar music

52 Yellowfin tuna

TO THE
DANCING
BUGA BREAK-IN AT
THE FIRST
NATIONAL BANK.WHY ARE YOU STOPPING
ME NOW? YOU'RE OMNISCIENT! SURELY YOU
KNEW I WAS HEADING DOWN THIS PATH!

YOU'RE RIGHT. PERHAPS IT WOULD BE BETTER IF I TIME-TRAVELED BACK...



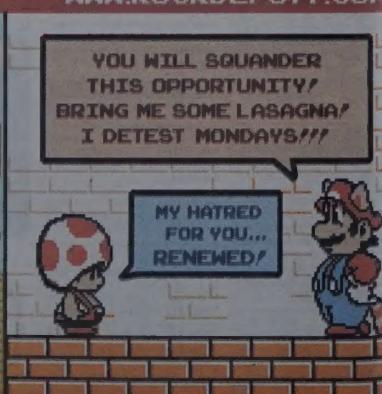
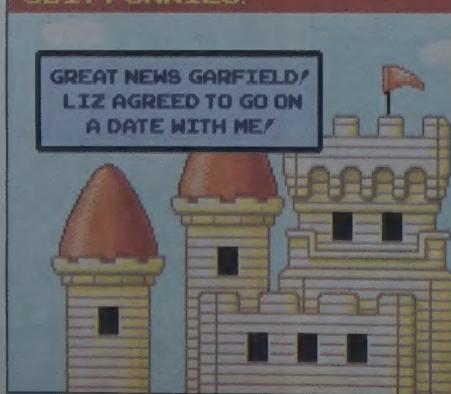
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INTERSECTIONS • PHOTOS OF OUR NEIGHBOURHOODS



Sadie Landers, 12, shoots some pool in her family's barn outside Sherwood Park.
PHOTO BY MERYL SMITH LAWTON

t8a

FIRST PERSON • EDMONTON STORIES • BY LAUREN CONOLLY | 57 words

Common Denominator Syndrome

**DESPITE MY BEST EFFORTS TO AVOID
GETTING MY HOPES UP ON NEW YEAR'S EVE,
I WAS DISAPPOINTED ONCE AGAIN**

I've always approached New Year's Eve with a healthy mix of indifference and scorn.

At 9 p.m., pretty couples, sparkling clothes, and fresh optimism abound, but by the early morning hours girls are hopelessly crying, drunk, and lying in snowbanks. Other girls are entangled with strangers making their first regret of the New Year. Of course, these girls wear their highest heels for the occasion.

I am not immune to the lure of

starting fresh with the New Year. Maybe I'll get my life together this year. I'll be happy with my job, meet a nice guy, and start taking French lessons. At the very least, I'll start flossing every night. So, like everyone else, I slipped on my party shoes and went with some friends to The Starlite Room for the best New Year's Eve Party Ever. Or maybe just the drunkest. Time would tell.

I wasn't looking to meet anybody. I expected nothing and have a hard

time imagining that a single "nice" guy even exists. On my worst days I am convinced that I'm the problem. Every relationship I've had has failed; therefore, I must be the problem. My roommate calls it Common Denominator Syndrome.

But on New Year's 2009, things were looking up. I ended up talking to a cute guy all night. We seemed to have a similar sense of humour, which is important when you're sarcastic like me. We kissed each other's cheek at midnight. I gave him my real name. He told me he was a firefighter. I could have taken him home with me.

I didn't. I was going for class. I wasn't going to become yet another crying girl on New Year's Eve. Instead I gave him my phone number and patted myself on the back for opting to take the high road.

Time passed. He never called.

Maybe he just wasn't that into me. One friend who was there that night

said he was a liar because he didn't meet the height requirements to be a firefighter. I don't know if that's true, but it's still my favourite response.

A month ago, this would have devastated me. How could someone not like me? Boo hoo.

But something has happened recently. I've finally accepted myself for who I am. I am not going to tolerate living like Cinderella in her sparkling shoes waiting for a handsome prince to make my life enjoyable. Cinderella is the epitome of pathetic New Year's Eve girls everywhere. The only reason she is socially accepted is because Disney has been shoving her down our throats for umpteen years.

Instead, I'm working on a new painting and planning a trip to Europe.

Here is a message for you, Mr. Firefighter; if you're reading this. I'm going back to The Starlite Room for my birthday. I'll be the girl with the newly dyed red hair. I'll be smiling, and giving you the finger.

twice is nice



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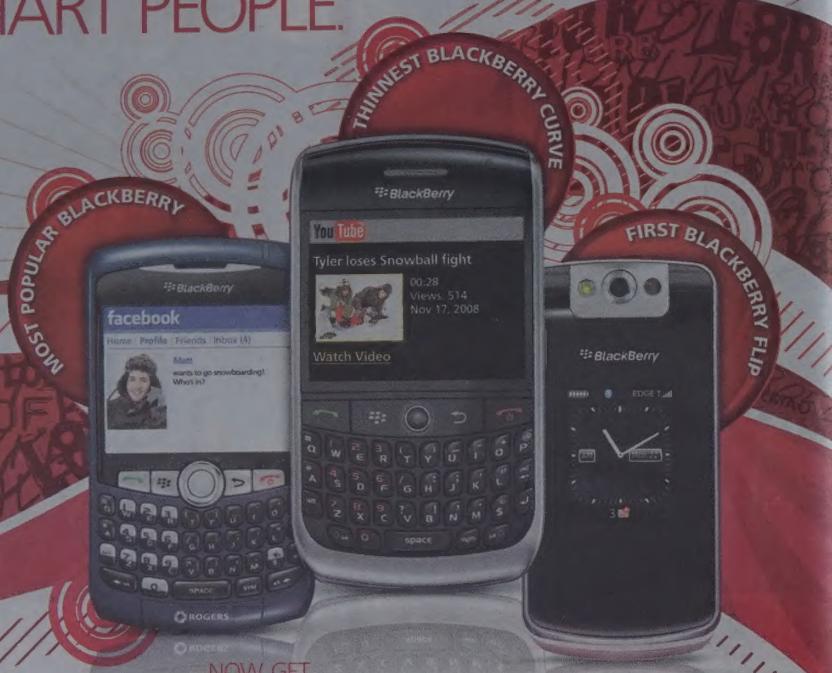
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